

THE MAN FROM WORLD'S END

Alexander Irvine

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THE MAN FROM
WORLD'S END AND
OTHER STORIES OF LOVERS
AND FIGHTING MEN By
ALEXANDER IRVINE

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*The Man from World's End
and other Stories*

“ Gold above and gold below,
The earth reflected the golden glow,
From river and hill and valley ;
Gilt by the golden light of morn,
The Thames it look'd like the Golden Horn,
And the Barges that carried coal or corn,
Like Cleopatra's Galley.”

I

JIMMY HAMPDEN was born in Chelsea, in a very small house, which is now a junk shop, at the junction of Riley Street and World's End Passage. These are the poorest of Chelsea's poor streets. They lead from King's Road to Cheyne Walk, and “ The Walk ” at this point wriggles alongside the river as irregularly as the track of a worm on a wet sidewalk.

Just across the river lies Battersea, which is hidden by tall bare walls of great flour

mills and warehouses. To the left is Battersea Bridge, and still further to the left towards Westminster can be seen Chelsea Bridge. The opposite shore looks dull, brutal, and bare by day, but at night, when the lights gleam tremulously on the water, or in the moonlight when the shadows of the tall buildings look like cathedral spires and turreted ramparts, the sight is as fascinating as anything to be seen in London.

In the summer time, day and night, the human stream oozes out of Riley Street and World's End Passage into Cheyne Walk and along the Embankment—the elders for the breeze that blows down the river, and the youngsters for the joy of the water at high tide and for the mud when the tide is low.

When Jimmy's grandfather was a boy, Turner was painting his immortal skyscapes on the roof of Number 118—a few doors from Jimmy's birthplace—and when Jimmy's

father came along a peculiar-looking man named Whistler used to be seen walking along the edge of the river in search of the things which are now so highly valued by the nation.

A boy's access to the river was much more free in those days. Now a wall runs from Riley Street, to beyond the Chelsea Bridge. In the other direction, towards Wandsworth, there is an iron railing. The rails are about six inches apart and are sharply spiked at the top. Nothing is more astonishing to the people whose front windows overlook the river than the facility with which a large section of the population of World's End squeeze through the railing into the river bed. There comes a time, however, when it can no longer be done. Then they just have to go over the wall—if they go at all.

For generations the river's edge at World's End has been a harbour of refuge for old derelict barges and stranded wrecks, and at

the age when Jimmy could easily squeeze through between the iron rails he found an ideal world—a world of romance, chivalry and adventure. Armed with a wooden sword and a toy pistol, he was at one time the immortal Nelson, at another Captain Kidd. Sometimes terrific sea battles were fought between the doughty crews from Riley Street and the equally gallant seamen from World's End Passage and Gilroy Square.

Sometimes a von Tirpitz, in the form of a river policeman, would arrive and torpedo the rival fleets and scatter the crews. But these were only temporary embarrassments. He was no sooner out of sight than the gallant commanders would call their crews on deck and prepare for action. Sometimes these men of the mighty deep longed for rough weather and high seas. Then they would run from side to side and rock their ships in the soft mud.

Sometimes all the old wrecks were manned under the command of one admiral and

prepared to engage the Spanish Armada. Instructions were given, caps for the toy pistols distributed and the flags nailed to the mast heads. The Spanish Armada always hugged the Battersea shore and the crews of the British fleet, unable to taunt them into battle, would yell across the river, "Cowards! 'Fraid cats!"

One day a soviet of mudlarks elected Jimmy Admiral of the Fleet, and during his precarious tenure of command a mutiny broke out. The Admiral—always arrayed in two simple garments—displayed remarkable courage, but the odds were against him. He lost the upper of his two garments—it was washed overboard—and his nose came in violent contact with the brutal fist of a mutineer! When he struck his flag and went ashore for repairs his father met him, deprived him of his commission, divested him of the remaining garment, belaboured him on the softest part of his body with a belt and put him to bed! No British admiral

had ever been so utterly humiliated ! The crews got wind of it and further humiliated him by trying him by court-martial for cowardice !

To add insult to injury Jimmy was sent to school ! His old love of the sea died hard, but going to school meant the use of a third garment, and that landed him in a social stratum in which he became a mere onlooker through the iron rails—with only an occasional impulse to break through.

The social convention which demands—even in World's End—boots and caps, irritated him, but compensation lay in the fact that with these encumbrances he was enabled to travel and see other worlds—the world of Battersea and Hyde Park. Once his parents took him in a steamer to Richmond, but on the return trip, in order to enjoy to the full this exciting experience, he stuffed his cap in his pocket, and, taking his boots off, slung them about his neck !

Wherever he went, whatever he did, always and for ever in his heart of hearts he carried one great regret. He was sure—morally certain indeed—that, but for that bloody nose, he could have pulled off, on board the *Victory*, his flagship, the greatest naval success ever achieved in the turgid waters of World's End !

II

At the age of fifteen, he emerged from the unconventional democracy of World's End and opened a new chapter in his career as third assistant to the gardener of Burnham Hall, the country seat of the Duke of Burnham.

For a man who had set his foot on the first rung of the social ladder and who had been forced to buy his first razor, the word Jimmy sounded childish. He was now called Jim—at his own request.

His father had been for many years a butler in the family of Lord Ogilvy, and it

was through his lordship's benevolent interest that Jim got his new and important position.

At the age of twenty he had achieved the position of second gardener. At twenty-five he was a footman. That meant a complete readjustment in mental attitude and personal attire. Clad in his plum-coloured uniform and brass buttons he looked a splendid specimen of his race. His facial characteristics would have claimed the instant attention of the physiognomist. He had what is called a square chin. His eyes were of the oval synthetic type, and his nose, though well shaped, was large. He had a wide, open forehead, and the one compromise he would not make was to crop it pompadour fashion. All these things denote intelligence, tenacity, a wide outlook and a robust physical life.

When a man sets a distinct boundary line to his own mental capacity he develops what might be called an ingrowing brain.

The Duke's old butler helped Jim to erect this mental barrier. He liked Jim and hoped to hand over the keys to him some day. It was a seed thought that grew into an ambition. Jim began his preparation. His language was faulty. He improved it. He made up his mind to speak the English language as flawlessly as his master—which wasn't as much of an accomplishment as Jim imagined it to be. He hadn't gone very far in his studies before he discovered that his master's could be considerably improved. He studied also the movements of the body and made improvements. He needed help, but to ask for it would give away the show. By the merest accident he opened "Pride and Prejudice" one day and forthwith devoured it.

Everything he did was a means to an end—and the end was a Butlership. The world contained only that—for him. Butlers, like poets, are born, not made. The real thing in butlers is peculiarly an English product. It

is an English state of mind. The French article is modelled after the English, but by common consent is adjudged a faint imitation at best. Logomachy and butlering are incompatible. Ambition and butlership are just as incongruous. A butler made in America fails for the reason that his ultimate happiness always resides in his next job. In England butlership is ultimate; it is the *status ultimo*!

Jim became butler to the Duke of Burnham and his name changed to James. From the Duke's point of view James was an ideal butler. He had a butler's mind, a butler's manner. He had arrived unconsciously at another world's end. It was bereft of poetry, romance, chivalry and adventure. He was a menial with a subservient mind — a full-grown man bowing in the house of Rimmon and basking in Rimmon's smiles. The value of such a mental status depends entirely upon the angle from which it is viewed.

James remained single for a rather unbutler-like reason : his pet antipathies were split infinitives and double negatives, and he did not number amongst his female acquaintances anyone who did not use them in profusion ! The butler mind demanded a connubial arrangement that would commend itself to the Duke and the Duke's family. There was a chambermaid at Burnham Hall who was a student of Shakespeare and adored by the Duchess. James had walked out with her several times in the cool of the evening, when the day's work was done. He learned much from her, but a slight squint and a rather mottled complexion put her out of the running for anything more intimate. He had some latent fastidiousness and remained as he was.

III

James was thirty-five years of age when the tocsin sounded for war. His ear by this time had been so thoroughly attuned to

other and more peaceful sounds that he just barely heard it at all. No butlers had ever gone to war—especially Duke's butlers. He never questioned his attitude—it was part of the butler mind to relate every detail of life, every quiver of emotion to the sole object of his existence—the service of his master.

The tocsin sounded again. This time he heard it quite plainly.

"Don't worry, James," the Duke said; "I will see that you are excused."

Nevertheless James was one day called before a tribunal to give an account of the deeds done in the butlership and to explain, if he could, why he should not shoulder a rifle and fight for his country. The Duke was there to explain, but somehow the explanation fell short of exemption. James had to go.

This war was different from all other wars, and when a common grocer, a railway engineer, and an army captain turned down a real live duke, James thought the mora

order of the universe had slipped a cog. It had—several, indeed, but it took a dynamic shock in his thinking process to make it clear to him just what had happened.

James, with a little help from the Duke, and on the strength of the fact that an uncle of his once served in it, joined the Honourable Artillery Company, and as soon as he donned khaki he was called Hampden.

The H.A.C. had not only a splendid record as a fighting unit, but they trained over 3,000 men for commissions during the war. They had this additional record, that up to August, 1918—when I was billeted for a night with them at Equien—they had not had a court-martial. I believe they wound up the show with that distinction.

Hampden had heard the reports of exploding bombs in England, but the explosions were a mile off. His first experience with Goths in France furnished him with another story.

Jerry was after our transport. He knew

the avenues of our supply and concentrated on them most of his ingenuity and energy.

One night at a congested traffic centre a Gotha hovered around dropping a bomb every few minutes, and disappearing between the explosions. When he had dropped all his eggs another took his place. We had nothing in the air at the time and this nibbling kept up for an hour.

Hampden and a Tommy of the line found themselves in a dry ditch beside the main road. It was still daylight and they could size each other up in a few minutes.

“ Wot’s Aich Ai C ? ” said Tommy, looking at H.A.C. on Hampden’s shoulder straps.

“ Honourable Artillery Company.”

“ Oh, yus, you’re the blokes wot’s got a plice down City Road, eh ? ”

“ I have never been there, but that is our head-quarters.”

“ Sai, is’t true ye pai two quid a year t’ b’long ? ”

Just then a bomb dropped fifty yards

away and a shower of earth bespattered them.

"Yes, that's true," said Hampden, wiping the dirt off his face.

"Wall, I'm damned!" said Tommy, spitting out a mouthful, "two b——y quid to come hout 'ere, eh?"

"Yes."

"Gawd!" exclaimed Tommy, "ye must be craizy."

"Your face looks familiar to me," said Hampden, looking intently at Tommy, as they lay almost flat at the bottom of the ditch.

"Jus' wot I was a'thinkin'," said the other; "w'e're's yer 'ome?"

"London."

"Hat wich hend of th' fifty mile circumf'rence?"

"Chelsea," said Hampden, laughing.

"Me too," said Tommy, turning over on his elbow to have a better look at his companion's face. As he looked, a smile

suffused his face ; then he laughed outright.

" What's the joke ? " asked Hampden.

" Oh, nothink ; I was just a kid again fur a mo'."

" How strange," said Hampden. " I was just at the moment a child again, on the banks of the river."

" At World's End ? "

" Yes—yes—— What do you know about World's End ? "

" Ha, ha, ha ! Wot a —— strange ol' world, eh ? Funny, too, funny as 'ell. Sai, chum, don't himagine I'm craizy if I hask a curus questyon, will ye ? Eh ? "

" Of course not. Go on—ask it."

" Wus ye never a bloomin' hadmiral ov a British fleet ? "

" At World's End ? "

" Yus, hin the mud wi' barges and wrecks fur ships an' toy pistols an' wooden swords, eh ? "

" Yes."

"An' wus yer naime Skinny?"

"Yes—'Skinny' Hampden."

"Blime! I'll be jiggered if I didn't think so. Wall, Skinny, d'ye remember a terrific mutiny and broken swords, and a bloody-nosed hadmiral?"

"Yes; for Heaven's sake, were you there? Were you a captain, or a mutineer, or what?"

"I wasth' bloke wotsmashed yer — nose? Ha, ha, ha! Wot a world. Ha, ha, ha! An' 'ere we——"

B-o-o-m! went a bomb and cut the sentence short, then another and a third in quick succession. The men lay flat, face downwards, expecting to be blown to shredded flesh any minute.

"Has I wus a'saiin' w'en Jerry interrupted—'erewe hare. Sai Skinny, d'ye 'member th' summers in th' mud? Eh, wot! Lumme, weren't they just grand, eh——"

"Ah, yes—and let me see—what was your name then?"

"Me? I wus Dick Deadeye, Captain ov

th' *Harethusa*—th' finest craft wot ever lay bottom up in th' 'arbour ov World's End." And they laughed like children.

"And do you remember the soft moonlight on the old river and then again on dark nights, the long shimmering reflections of the lights from the bridges?"

"Wonderful, I calls it."

"In the moonlight, the shadows of the mills looked like castles—the shadows of the tall chimneys looked like church spires; then the mists—how strange and mysterious everything used to look in a fog. The sea gulls and the little river craft, the excursion steamers, the racing crews——"

"Don't—don't sai no more, Skinny. Blime! Ye make me 'omesick."

"Do you remember the foreign fleet that always lay close to the Battersea shore? "

"Th' Harmada, ye mean, eh? "

"Yes."

"Th' blighters! We never could indooce 'em hout t' fight, could we, Skinny? "

"Never; but we had foemen worthy of our wooden swords in the river police. They engaged us all right."

"An' our dads did, too! Leastways, mine did, wi' 'is belt hon m' stern sheets, as we seamen use ter sai, eh?"

The twilight melted into darkness, the night came on and the Gothas hovered around. The men were not paying much attention now. They were fighting those mimic battles over again on the Thames, and dreaming of projected invasions of Battersea and Wandsworth.

"Them was 'appy days, eh, Skinny?"

"Aye, that they were, despite the mud and slime which covered our purple and fine linen, and the bleeding bare feet and bloody noses—it was the happiest period of my life."

"An' mine. Blime! I wish we wus kids again, 'appy an' free, wi' no care, and no——"

"Maybe it was a sort of preparation for all this," Hampden interrupted.

"Maibe—'oo knows?"

The night became calm overhead and still, the stillness being broken occasionally by the distant sound of the guns. The men shook hands and went to their camps.

The story of Hampden's career as a lieutenant is veiled. Details are lacking. I can only put the fragments together as they fit each other. Names of men and places are omitted. The essential facts only can be stressed.

Trained by the H.A.C., he was commissioned and sent to an infantry regiment. Great soldiers are not always great men, nor are fine military personalities always great soldiers. Greatness, intelligence and character are tested, tried and proven in great crises. A crisis is of short duration, but it is a school in which a man gets a good insight into himself. In the storm and stress of battle, the military values and the qualities of personal character spring to the front. They cannot be hidden. Soldiers are as

prone to jealousy as civilians are—most soldiers in this war were civilians. But the instances where jealousy blocked the progress of a man who had the chance and, having it, demonstrated ability—were rare.

The first real fighting in which Hampden was engaged made a marked change in him. The closed mind of the butler opened wide its doors and windows, and light came in. In the white light of a new experience, Hampden was born again.

One night he gathered his platoon together in a communication trench and told them the story of his life, and ended with these words : “ I am probably the oldest platoon commander in this Division,” he said, “ and that simply means that I have had more experience in life. Now we’ve got certain work to do, and I believe we will do it better if we all understand each other. Let’s cultivate good fellowship and a pride in our group. I am not here merely to give orders ; I am here to give help and sympathy. If you

have any trouble or embarrassment, come at once to me and we will thresh it out. We may not be great soldiers, but we can be great friends and good comrades."

On another occasion he drew out of the men their views of life, adding a comment here and there when he thought it was needed. The men learned to love and respect him. His progress in his Mess was not quite as successful, though it was quite a long removal from failure. No officers' mess was ever without an unwritten tradition that held in check the parvenu—the snob and the ass. It was only when Hampden came in contact with these ultra elements that he found trouble—and not so much trouble even then. One night an argument arose about the Labour problem. Few officers knew anything about it, and the less a man knew of the subject, the more voluble and cocksure he was likely to be. A young officer, Hampden's senior by three months, and junior in years by fifteen, was laying down the law. His father

was an employer of labour and had solved the problem years ago—there was nothing further to say on it. Hampden was reticent always, and could only be dragged into an argument when provoked by stupidity.

The scion of the successful was vigorously defending the proposition that the only way to prevent strikes was to stand the strikers up before a brick wall and shoot them. Hampden, smiling, contended that English character was in the nature of things that couldn't be shot.

"What were you before the war?" he shouted at Hampden.

There were some hot words from this subaltern of superior knowledge and some that were unlawful to utter, and outburst was polished off by: "What the —— do you know, anyway?"

There was a moment's silence in which Hampden looked at the young man in surprise and pity.

"I know a gentleman when I meet him," was his quiet rejoinder.

But there came a day when all in the Mess learned a little more of what he knew. The history of it will never be written. It will not even become a tradition. Too few were eye-witnesses to the scene ; amongst millions, a battalion is not many.

When Hindenburg determined to play what turned out to be his last card, he played it with a surprisingly accurate knowledge of the cards held by his enemy. It was a master stroke and succeeded to a degree not even yet fully realised. In ten hours' continuous fighting, he was pressing our armies back towards the sea. I was amongst those rolled back by the onslaught, and it was no uncommon news to learn of whole battalions being wiped out—not a man being left to tell the tale. Other battalions were surrounded and taken prisoners *en masse*. In that part of the line where Hampden's battalion was engaged, there was terrific fighting ; at one

time the Boche aeroplanes swooped down and killed the gunners at their guns, and killed every horse in the sunken roads. The C.O. seemed dazed by the situation. He had no artillery support and the ammunition was running low. There was one officer in that battalion who knew the situation—every detail of it—and that man was Hampden. In a critical moment he felt he could no longer maintain silence.

"They have broken through on our right, sir," he said as he saluted the C.O., "and our men are pressed back on the left—in ten minutes we will be completely surrounded."

The C.O. didn't tell him to mind his own business, but it amounted to the same thing. Some of the men had heard the conversation, and things like that in an emergency have a way of spreading. It permeated the minds of the men in five minutes. When the lives of a thousand men are about to be sacrificed to a red-taped stupidity, what is the duty of a man who knows what to do? That

was the thing that engrossed the mind of an Englishman who, for the nonce, was a citizen soldier. In a psychological moment like that, the man who hesitates is lost. The C.O. hesitated—his staff hesitated with him. The men, knowing the situation, were about to break. They were audibly cursing the stupid man who had permitted them to get into the dilemma, and who now seemed unable to get them out. Hampden took the bit in his teeth, drew his revolver, and in a voice that struck terror to weaker minds, took command.

"Steady, men," he shouted. "Our lives depend on steadiness and movement. Follow me."

As he moved out, there was a sort of united growl of protest from the officers. Hampden dealt with it promptly.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I shall shoot dead in his tracks the first man who interferes with the movement."

The men cheered and followed in good

order. When they reached a place of safety, he kept command, got a fresh supply of ammunition, and without assistance from the air or the artillery, he led the battalion in an attack which stemmed the tide of the German army and saved thousands of British lives. No more extraordinary feat of arms occurred in the world war. He saw that his men were fed that night. There were tears in his eyes when he congratulated them, and away over in the German lines they heard the British cheers—cheers for Hampden.

Next morning, with his belt in his hand, he confronted the C.O. for court martial, or whatever the action called for.

"Put your belt on," said the C.O., "and meet me at the main road in five minutes' time."

The two men walked in silence to the dug-out of the Divisional Commander, and the C.O. told the whole story. He, too, was a man and a Briton, and arose magnificently to the occasion.

IV

" You are very reticent about your life," the nurse said to Hampden, as they sat on the balcony of Buckingham Gate Hospital.

" It is too utterly blasé and commonplace," he replied.

" But to me, surely you want to at least go over your ambitions and ideals."

" To you," he said, " I want to go over everything, every detail, but somehow every time I get to the point, something chokes me. I am an awful coward."

The nurse laughed.

Hampden had been the recipient of three leaden messages from Jerry, and for a time his life was despaired of. He was not out of danger, but his recovery was not quite as slow as he wished it to be, for—well, the secret of that sat beside him on the balcony.

" You can begin with the episode that earned you the Military Cross," she said. " I heard yesterday that you were to be decorated as soon as you were able to attend the Palace."

"Oh," he replied, "I hadn't heard of that." Then he lowered his voice and almost in a whisper, continued: "I have already been decorated."

The nurse looked up from her sewing, and said: "How? What was the decoration?"

"It was an interior decoration."

"Good cooking?"

"No, hardly."

"The news that you were out of danger?"

"No. I would rather have remained in danger for another month."

"Silly man. For what reason?"

"That's a secret."

"I already know some of your secrets—one more would not make such an awful difference."

"Where did you learn them?"

"From you."

"In that unconscious period?"

"Well, yes, and if you are very anxious to know what you let out, you'd better

open up your sealed casket and let me have a look in."

"Look here, nurse—you see, I don't even know your name—if you tell me what I raved about, I will tell you all my secrets, but you must give me time. I haven't nerve enough to tell you the worst of them, much less the best."

"Oh, well," she said, "I suppose I'll have to humour you. I learned that you were in the Navy before you were in the Army. You yelled and shouted about ships and admirals, and things like that—"

Hampden laughed loudly, and the nurse was curious. He continued to laugh, and apologised. Then he told her of his childhood at World's End, and skipping over many years, brought in Dick Deadeye and the change of mind that came to him in the cataclysm. She was so absorbed that the sewing lay untouched on her lap, and they gazed into each other's eyes, searching for things beyond the power of words.

The first day Hampden was able to go out, he was wheeled in a chair to St. James's Park by the nurse.

"Who was your visitor yesterday?" she asked, as she sat on a bench beside his wheel chair.

"The Duke of Burnham," he said.

"The Duke of Burnham!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, why are you surprised?"

"Oh, for no reason at all," and the conversation was given a sharp turn.

"What are you going to do after the war?" was her next question.

"Live," he answered at once—"live a real life. I have just begun to know what life means. I was in the employ of the Duke of Burnham, and when I told him I could never serve him in a similar capacity again, he was offended."

"You'll go into business, then?"

"It matters little how one gets a living—to live is the thing. To live simply and think deeply, and lend a hand in a fearfully

distraught world, is what I look forward to. I have no fear, no apprehension of any kind. It's a big world and there is a place for me, I shall find it quickly enough when I get out to do so." He hesitated for a moment, and then, in a softened, subdued tone, said :

" What are you going to do ? "

" Oh, I shall be expected to go back to that dumb show called Society, and add yet another parasite to those who toil not, neither do they spin. And that is infinitely worse than being in the employ of my—of the Duke of Burnham."

" But you can't—it's impossible."

" Why impossible ? "

" Because—because——"

" Go on, finish it."

But he didn't, and when the hour was up, they went back to the hospital.

v

For over a week she urged Hampden to finish the sentence, but he always excused

himself on the score of nerve. One day, she begged the privilege of wheeling him to the Palace. There were over a hundred to be decorated that morning. Four of them were to receive the V.C. When the Master of Ceremonies called the names out, the nurse gasped when she had to wheel her charge up to receive his V.C.

When the King came along, he forgot for a moment the function.

"Well, Lady Sybil," he said, "I am glad to see you here, and in charge of an officer who is one of the bravest men in my army."

Hampden received his V.C. and the congratulations of the King, and the nurse wheeled him away. As they reached the gate, a rough hand was laid on Hampden's shoulder, and a rougher voice exclaimed :

"'Ello, Skinny, you bally ol' hadmiral o' the fleet. Giv'us yer mitt, ol' boy."

"Hello, Dick," said Hampden. "This is Lady Sybil. I've just learned her name from the King, but she is the greatest nurse in the

British Empire, and the most beautiful woman in the world."

"'Oly Smokes !'" said Dick Deadeye ; and the procession moved on.

"He's a dear," said Lady Sybil ; "I hope he'll come around before you leave—and now"—in a low voice—"will you finish that sentence ?"

"Ah, no ; that can never be finished," he said. "It goes into the chamber of my imagery as a picture of what might have been."

"Then you are not the free soul I took you to be. You are still bound by conventions, and titles and names that mean nothing."

"Not me—but you, you——"

"I am a woman."

"Then I'll finish it."

"I dare you !"

"The last word was 'because,' wasn't it ?"

"Yes."

"Then—because you are necessary to my life. Because I love you. Because——"

"Even when you are well?"

"I'm well now. I've been bluffing for at least three weeks."

She laughed, and the procession moved on. Pestiferous photographers and reporters were around. When they had gone, he made a movement to get out.

"Here, Sybil," he said, "jump in, and I'll wheel you home."

"Oh, no, hypocrite and deceiver," she said; "I have known all along that you were malingering."

"But you saw two bullets taken out, didn't you?"

"Yes, and I was delighted that they couldn't get the other."

"Why?"

"I don't know."

"Ha, ha; so you were also swinging the lead, eh? Now listen, Sybil—excuse me, Lady Sybil—I—I have a confession to make before you roll this baby carriage up to that orphan asylum."

“What is it ? ”

“It is—it—is——”

“How odd,” she interrupted.

“Yes ; it's odd, but it's true. I—I was a butler once.”

“Goodness ! ” she exclaimed, “I thought you were going to say you'd been a burglar. I knew you had been a butler the day you came in.”

“Heavens ! And yet—look here, comrade,” he said to a Tommy who was passing at the moment, “will you do me a great favour ? ”

“Yes, sir.”

“Wheel that baby carriage to Buckingham Gate Hospital,” and he jumped out beside the nurse, who protested, but the Tommy moved off with a chuckle.

“Now, then, take my arm and play the Good Samaritan for five minutes, while I find out whether I'm shell-shocked or just walking in my sleep.”

“What do they give men V.C.'s for any way ? ” she asked, laughing.

"For something I haven't got : Courage, nerve—look here—here is a restaurant, thank God. Let's have a cup of tea and——"

Next morning when the doctor asked the nurse how her patient was, she said she hadn't taken his pulse yet, but that after the ceremony he had completely broken down—in a tea shop.

"Yes, doctor, that's true," said Hampden, "but I pulled through nicely, thank you ; by the way, let me introduce you to my fiancée."

"There is nobody to speak for Thomas except people who have a theory to work off on him ; and nobody understands Thomas except Thomas, and he does not always know what is the matter with himself."

Kipling.

I

HIGGINS, Huntley and Watson were chums and inseparable. A score of times the platoon had been smashed to bits, but when the fragments were collected after a scrap, the trio managed to dig themselves in together. I came across them first at Crouy on the Somme when the A.T.N. Division came out of the line for a couple of weeks' rest. That was in July, 1918. I was at Lieramont a few weeks after the big advance in August, and met Higgins as he emerged from the woods of Aizecourt le Bas

where he had been studying nature with an automatic revolver.

"Like t' 'ave a look in on th' boys?" he asked.

I was to sleep at Templeux La Fosse that night with the Yeomanry of the 74th Division, but a chance to spend an evening with the three Pioneers was a much more attractive proposition.

"Where are you billeted?" I asked.

Higgins laughed.

"In a mud hole out there about eight kilometres beyond Lieramont."

I had to earn my rations at six that night, but I got the lay of the land from Higgins and worked my passage there in a lorry at the close of the day—taking chances or pot luck on getting back in the early morning.

The 2nd Batt. Royal Fusiliers, the 2nd Bedfords and the Sussex Pioneers were strung out behind a ridge a few kilometres from the German lines.

Higgins was watching for me on the Lieramont road, and together in the twilight we went over the desolate region to his "mud hole." Higgins was over forty. He drove a London bus before the war, and one night he ran her into the yard and, before going home for his supper, he went to a recruiting station and joined up. He was in France before the end of 1914, and on his sleeve he wore the little red stripe of those whom he described as "'aving hears to 'ear."

Watson was about thirty, and wore three blue stripes.

Huntley was entitled to wear three blue stripes, but wore nothing.

When he slid into the dug-out Watson and Huntley were "standing to." They had received no orders, but there are times when fighting men need no orders. The order is in the air, and by instinct they know something is brewing.

I was invited to a seat on an empty petrol tin. A dixie of tea was taken from some

smouldering embers and handed around. Ventilation was sacrificed for the luxury of a candle—the hole was covered. On a board four feet long were stuck pictures of the King, Vesta Tilley, Lloyd George and "'Ole Bill." In the hole—as outside—tragedy, comedy, life and death trod on each other's toes. By the quick glances of the men I knew they were making sure that everything was ready for instant use. Then we settled down for a smoke and a talk.

Coming from the outside world I was expected to tell what was going on, for few newspapers were to be had out there. By a fortunate coincidence the Platoon Commander walked down the line giving some orders, and I made him the subject of a preliminary debate. They were agreed that under fire he was as brave a man as there was in the A.T.N. Division. They were equally agreed that under less dangerous circumstances he was a complete washout.

"What in —— was 'e drivin' at this

mornin', when 'e shot off 'is mouth on morale ? " asked Higgins.

" Oh, booze an' slackness an' little things like not 'avin' yer 'air parted in the middle ! " said Huntley.

" Rot ! " said Higgins. " Slackness it may be, for you was born tired, 'Untley, but booze ! 'Oo boozes 'ere ? 'Ow can it be 'ad ? A full barrel of this 'ere French swill wouldn't disturb a 'air on yer Charlie Chaplin ! "

" It ain't booze alone," said Watson. " It's bein' fed up on the everlastin' grind—we don't go over as we used to in the old days—we all know that."

" Ov course, when we himagined th' show would be over by Christmas, 1914, we did 'ave more spunk, it's true, but we goes over an' if this 'ere young 'ell-fer-leather Platoon Commander don't know it, Jerry does ! "

" Don't be too 'ard on th' blighter," said Watson, "'is job's fightin', not spoutin' on morality ! "

"Yer mixin' th' drinks 'as usual, Watson," said Huntley. "It ain't morality nor morals—hit's mor-ale, me boy. Morals is sort o' religion wich is foreign to a nature like yourn, an' morale is—well, hit's wat 'e said hit is!"

"An' wat did 'ee sai hit was?" asked Higgins, taking his pipe out of his mouth to emphasise the necessity of a direct answer.

Huntley removed his pipe also, and met the gaze of Higgins in a blank, uncertain way.

"I'll be blown to hatoms if I knows myself!" he said.

"Did 'e mean wind up, or nerves, or funk?" asked Higgins, as he struck a match and relit his pipe.

"If 'e did 'e must be craisy. 'Oos ben 'avin' wind up in the Pioneers?"

"'And me over your 'aversack with my baccy in it," said Huntley, "an' I'll throw some light on this 'ere discussion."

The haversack was handed over, but no great expectations were aroused. Huntley

had been an orderly at D.H.Q. for some months, and had picked up scraps of information which he doled out with much unction. He had created the suspicion, however, that when he was hard pressed he could spin yarn out of the fabric of his not over fertile brain. It was the possession of a little more than ordinary information that tired him of his cushy job and brought him back to his chums. He had to get drunk and disorderly to make the change—at least that was his way of doing it.

“ Since this 'ere division came out under Maxey, 'ow many 'ave bin on th' mat for wind up would you suppose? Jest about twenty-five an' ev'ry mother's son on 'em expected t' break 'is fast on cold lead next mornin' ! ”

“ 'Ow many on 'em did ? ” Higgins asked.

“ Five on 'em, no more, an' they 'ad a chance t' maike good, but th' 'int wasn't taiken, so they went west w' their 'ands behind their backs—by — they did ! ”

"Wat in —— are y' tryin' t' prove, 'Untley?" Higgins asked, as he snapped his pipe out of his mouth again and glared at Huntley. "Spit it out straight! D'ye want us t' b'lieve that one swallow maikes a summer—wich it don't—or that five poor blighters wi' nerves like cobwebs is th' British Harmy—eh?"

"You're haskin' for hinformation, ain't you?" replied Huntley. "You want t' know what mor-ale is, dontcher? Well, I'm atellin' you—don't yell before you're 'it, 'Iggins?"

"I'm not a-yellin' an' I'm not 'it, 'Untley; I'm taikin' hexception t'th' wai yer Jack Johnson hintellect beats aroun' th' bush hinstead ov goin' straight hover th' top an' at th' facts. But look 'ere, ol' chap, while you was a-tidyin' up th' floor ov th' hintelligence hoffice at D.H.Q., Watson an' me was keepin' on soldierin' an' by haccident like we got a little nearer some facts than you did, by only 'earin' on 'em!"

"Don't rub it in too 'ard on th' deserter, 'Iggins,'" said Watson. "'E come back to us, y'know."

"Oh, don't mind me!" said Huntley, with a wave of his hand. "I'm gettin' quite used to these hinsults in th' 'ouse ov me friends."

"Hour friend, 'Untley,'" said Higgins, directing his remarks to me, "is wat 'e calls a fatalist. 'E allows that wat's to 'appen will 'appen, an' wat isn't, won't. That bein' so——"

"Listen! 'Ark!" said Watson sharply.

Um-m um-m um-m—— There was no mistaking that sound. A moment later there was a crash and a dull deafening roar. We were bespattered with mud. We flattened out in the narrow dug-out and held our breath. Seven bombs fell within a few seconds of each other, and not very far off.

II

When we knew Jerry had gone, we got up. It was dark in the hole. The candle

was blown, we knew not where. Higgins lit a match.

"Where's 'Untley ?'" he asked.

No one knew. No one saw him leave or knew he had left. By the time we had found the candle and gathered ourselves together, Huntley pulled aside the piece of corrugated sheet iron which blocked the hole, and slid into our midst.

"Has I was a-sayin', sir," Higgins said, as he lit his pipe at the candle, and pretended not to have noticed Huntley's entrance, "hour friend 'Untley bein' a fatalist——"

"Yer friend 'Untley not bein' a born hidiot, Mr. 'Iggins, an' 'avin' some concern for th' man-power ov th' British Hempire," snapped Huntley, "taikes care on hisself ! "

"Where did you go ?" I asked.

"B—— near into a direct hit, sir, but I was maikin' a dive for a deeper 'ole ! "

When the laugh died down, Higgins took the initiative and got something off his chest.

"Well, has I 'ave said, we was doin'

things, an' one ov th' things I done was t' 'elp one ov them five chaps 'e speaks ov into th' company ov th' hangels. 'E 'ad wind up. 'E got a chanct. 'E 'ad it worse. 'E refused t' go over. I was guard over 'im th' last night, an' I want to sai that 'e was a miracle t' me. 'E sent for th' hofficer ov th' firin' party. 'Sir,' 'e sais, 'I 'ave a request t' maike. Will ye let me die without bein' blindfolded or bound? I've got over watever was wrong wi' me. I ham a man again an' want t' die like one!' Th' hofficer tried, but 'twas no use. "'T's th' law,' sais th' Colonel, 'an' must be carried out.' Th' hofficer 'ad tears in 'is eyes when 'e told th' kid an' 'e shuk 'is 'and."

"Oh, aye," Huntley interrupted, but that was as far as he got.

"'Old on there, 'Untley, I 'avent finished. That's one story—'ere's th' other. Wen I was in 'orspital I 'eard this story: Two colonels—both on 'em O.C.'s—were on th' mat for cowardice. One on 'em put up

a tall speech—'e was long on that. T'other one gets up an' sais: 'Gentlemen, I 'ave one request t' maike, wich is, that ye give me th' full penalty ov th' law.' They was cashiered an' kicked out. Th' horator was never heard on again. Th' groun' swallowed 'im up. T'other joined th' foreign legion ov the frog-eaters an' made good, has a full private. 'E was shot t' pieces, but 'e pulled through an' was decorated—th' Frenchies stuck a 'ardware shop on 'is left breast. Then th' miracle 'appened—'e was put back in 'is rank in the British Harmy. But 'ere's th' point, 'Untley, don't miss this—both ov these 'ere Colonels 'ad shell shock an' it tuk two years t' find it hout! That kid 'ad shell shock, too, an' it never was discovered at all!"

"An' mai I hask, Private 'Iggins, wat in — you're drivin' hat? W'at hare you tryin' t' prove?" asked Huntley with animation.

"That shell shock ain't no respecter ov

persons," said Watson, "an' don't care a d—— whether you're man or a hofficer—ain't that it, 'Iggins ?'"

"I'm not trying t' prove nothin' as I knows on. I'm statin' a few facts. Wind up is one o' them queer will-o'-th'-wisp things ye can't lay 'ands on, but it's my belief that when a man sais 'e never 'ad it 'e's bluffin' or lyin'. All men 'ave it, because all men 'ave nerves. Some is like silk, some like whipcord and some like wire. There is, if I mai sai so, a hverage mind in a Division. Hit's a fightin' thinkin' mind. When a man 'as silk nerves 'e goes under th' hverage. When 'e's got wire nerves 'e goes above it. Then we maike 'im a V.C. Th' man 'oo goes away below it—well, we shoot 'im—heexcept Diggers, ov course—they only goes west by th' Boche route !"

"Don't you think there are men who are absolutely fearless ?" I asked.

"Oh, ov course there is hexceptions," said Higgins. "There is hidiotz an' war corre-

spondents ; one don't know w'en 'e chaunces t' 'ave it an' t'other don't get th' chaunce t' 'ave it w'en 'e knows it. But no matter 'ow much th' paipers may print on th' 'glory' 'umbug, ev'ry fightin' man knows deep down in 'is 'eart w'at fear is, an' dontcher maike no mistake about it. But this 'ere is th' point—'Untley, hopen up yer skull an' tike hit in, ol' son—hour military leaders didn't 'ave no more hintelligence about treatin' 'wind up' or shell shock than one ov these 'ere Belgian 'ares ! "

The voice of the P.C. was heard and the men instinctively clutched at their rifles. An order was given. I climbed out for a word with the P.C. There was scene shifting to be done on a large scale, and shaking hands with my friends, I departed for Templeus la Fosse.

III

Six months later I was in Serain. The A.T.N. Division was on ground they had won at great cost, of which the Sussex

Pioneers had paid a large share. Colonel Guy Blewitt, the G.S.O.I., gave me the list, and a cross marked the names of the officers who had crossed the Great Divide. Amongst them was the name of the P.C. I was almost afraid to ask about the three Pioneers. Why not let the last sight of them in the dug-out remain? Why mar that picture by another, and maybe a sad one? I asked myself these questions, but I inquired nevertheless. I found Watson, and he was the loneliest man I met in France. I brought him to my billet, and he told me the story.

"D'ye remember th' night you left us, sir?"

"Yes, I shall never forget it!"

"Well, about a hour after y' left th' P.C. come along. 'I want two more men t' maike up a raidin' party,' 'e sais. We stud to hattention. 'Hi'm first on th' list, sir,' sais 'Iggins. 'You ain't nothink ov th' kind,' sais 'Untley, 'you've got six kiddies, an' besides you went hover last night.'

'An' w'at 'ave you got? ' th' P.C. hasks
'Untley.

"' A tom cat, sir! '

"' W'at 'ave you got, Watson? ' 'e sais.
" 'Honly a mother, sir! '

"' Beg pardon, sir,' sais 'Iggins, ' hit's true
I've got six kiddies, but they're a-growin' up—
'Untley's tom cat ain't a-growin'! Some
dai this —— war—excuse me, sir—will
be hover, an' w'en hit is, if I pulls
through, I want my kids t' know they 'ad
a Dad! '

"' You're a 'opeless lot! ' sais th' P.C.,
'an' you can all go hover—stand by! '

" Has soon has 'e goes, 'Iggins w'acks
'Untley on th' pit ov 'is stomach with 'is
water-bottle an' sais: "'Untley, ol' son,'
'e sais, 'you're a sausage—jest a bloomin'
big fat sausage! '

"' An' you're a 'opeless hidiot! ' sais
'Untley, 'swelp me if you ain't, to be a-
saddlin' th' British Hempire with an hextra
horphan asylum an' all because you don't

know th' diff'rence between wind up an' wind down !'

" We went hover in a bunch that night, sir. We took ol' Jerry's trench an' we got w'at we was after—a bag o' Jerries—jest t' find hout w'at was a-goin' on over there, but w'en we came back hout ov 'ell, as you might sai, 'Iggins didn't hanwer th' roll-call—'e was done in, 'e was.' "

Watson was the kind of man to whom emotion is an unpardonable disgrace. He hesitated in the tale and fumbled for a handkerchief which he didn't have. I relieved him from his momentary embarrassment.

" You must have missed him, Watson," I said.

" Miss 'im, sir—w'y, 'Untley wouldn't hopen 'is faice t' me for a 'ole week ! 'E was like a hiceberg ! One night we was sittin' in th' dark thinkin' about nothin' in particular, has one might sai.

" ' Watson,' 'e sais, a-thawin' hout like,

'd'ye remember our hargymint with ol' Iggins about morale ?'

"'Ov course,' I sais; 'w'at d'ye think's appened t' my mem'ry ?'

"'Nothink,' 'e sais, 'but hit's just dawned hupon me w'at hit is !'

"'So ?' I sais; 'w'at is hit ?'

"'Guts is morale, Watson,' 'e sais, 'an' Iggins 'ad 'em !'

"'Untley was done in on th' knoll at Vondool [Vendhuile]. Eh, but that plaice took some taikin', sir. 'E lived 'alf a dai. I seen 'im in th' clearin' station.

"'Th' sargin is writin' somethink, Watson,' 'e sais, 'an' I wants ye t' taike hit t' General Lee. 'E promised, y' know, t' look hout for hour folks if we was done in.'

"'I didn't know ye 'ad any folks, 'Untley.'

"'I 'ave,' 'e sais. 'Th' sargin is writin' hit out.'

"Then 'e closed 'is eyes. "'E's gone, I think,' sais th' sargin. But 'e was honly

asleep. The sargint showed me w'at 'e writ an' made me sign it. It was a will, sir, an' in it 'Untley 'anded hover to 'Iggins's widder an' kids 'is tom cat an' ten year's savin's. Jerry, the ol' bar-tender hat th' 'Elephant,' 'ad th' cat. 'E was t' 'and 'im t' me, an' I was t' give 'm t' Mrs. 'Iggins."

" So that was what Huntley called ' folks,' "

I said.

" Yes, sir. Th' General was t' see them things done. An' w'en 'e come to 'e sais, ' Was I hoff me nut, Watson ? '

" ' W'y ? '

" ' Because if I wasn't I must 'a' bin dreamin' ; I seen ol' 'Iggins. 'E was in a funny rig-out an' I told 'im t' shed it or he'd git pinched.'

" ' You was just a-dreamin', 'Untley,' I sais ; ' just a-dreamin', ol' son.'

" ' Maybe I was, but my Tom an' 'Iggins's kids ain't no dream, Watson ; they're my folks, an' I 'opes they'll git all w'at's mine. Ov course hit would never do t' sai any-

think, but I do 'ope, Watson, that th' General will see t' them requests afore 'e habolishes early mornin' tea an' reforms th' 'Ouse of Lords ! '

"Has I told ye onct, 'e's 'ell on them things ! Th' sargin took 'is fist an' made 'is mark. A little while after 'e stretched hout for me and w'ispered, 'Cheerio, ol' son,' an' went west."

After a long pause he arose and went over to the window. Then he picked up his cap and muttered as if he were talking to himself :

"Eh, 'e was a good ol' sod, was 'Untley —'e was that ! "

"We are such stuff as dreams are made of"

I

THE place where Clastres used to be is about ten kilometres from Ham and five from the German lines of March, 1918. A few old gables, heaps of rubble and brick were all that remained—long before the great offensive. The surrounding country was utterly devastated. On March 18th, 1918, I was enjoying a cup of tea in a tent with some officers of the K.R.R.

"What do you make of that fellow Evans?" one officer asked another across the table.

"Oh, I think he's just a man whose brain is a little disordered and he can't keep his dreams and visions to himself," was the reply.

"Well," interposed a third, "to do him justice, we can't get over the accuracy with which he located that German battery the other night, can we?"

"My dear boy," said a major, "we can't fight the German on the information furnished by a man—or a regiment of men—who tells us that his spirit leaves the body and visits the Boche. It is the old story of the Angels of Mons over again."

"Quite true, sir," said a subaltern; "but when the airmen and all the resources at our disposal fail to locate a battery that has been giving us hell for a week, and this man takes a map and lays his finger on the spot, we could at least give him credit for that, and attach him to the Intelligence Department for a while to try him out on a few other things of that kind."

I became keenly interested, and asked who the man was and what he did. I found he was a private of more than ordinary intelligence who, after disclosing to his

captain his peculiar experience in dreams, suddenly found himself called "Joseph the Dreamer." Of course that was too long to last. It was quickly whittled down to "Joe." I found Joe in a garden. Whenever Tommy lands he begins forthwith to plant gardens, and in all France, Flanders and Belgium no greater or more artistic work was done in this respect than among the shell-holes and ruins of Clastres. It was a joy to see these little plots, bordered by whitewashed stones and divided here and there by gravel walks. Rustic woodwork stood awaiting the crimson ramblers and rods awaited the sweet-peas. There were vegetables of all kinds which would fill somebody's pot later—perhaps.

Joe did not feel inclined to talk. He told me that he was sorry he had ever told anybody of his experiences. Most men ridiculed the idea, but he had done some things of military value. He would "let it go at that," he said, and "no longer invite ridicule."

He was to be in Ham the following day, and promised to take tea with me.

I am a student of psychic phenomena, as most intelligent people are, but I am utterly bereft of personal experiences in such things. Most of my dreams are of the open-eyed daylight variety. But I have an open mind toward other varieties, and am a candidate for anything that will make the veil thinner and explain the mystery of dreams.

After tea on the 19th we went over to the old fortress—or what the Germans left of it—where Napoleon III was incarcerated for five years, and from which he escaped in the smock frock of a day labourer.

“I have had strange dreams all my life,” Joe began, “but during my life at the front I have had experiences that are new—quite new. Previously I could not remember a tenth of what I dreamed. Lately they are as clear as are the events of everyday life. Last week, for instance, I was asleep in a trench, when I suddenly arose out of the

body, and I looked back at it as I left it curled up in a heap. I was enveloped in a greenish-purple mist. I went over the German lines and into the German C.O.'s dug-out. He was discussing with his officers a British air raid. 'That battery must be moved at once,' he said. 'The chances are a hundred to one that those English swine have located it, and you know what that means. Here,' he said, 'on the north-west corner of the four cross-roads there is a hollow into which you can drag six big guns. Do it at once.' I looked at the map, and wondered all the time why it was they did not seize me.

"Well, I said nothing about this until I overheard the captain of my company discuss with an artillery officer the marvellous shooting of a battery they had failed to locate. I quivered with emotion as I listened. When I saw the captain alone I told him about the dream. He got a map and in two minutes I located the new position. 'Of course,' I

said, ‘ they may not have moved, but I was there when the order was given.’ ”

“ Was any attempt made by our artillery to verify your information ? ”

“ You bet there was. They may call me all kinds of a fool, but when lives are at stake none of them would take the responsibility of ignoring what I had said. The airmen located it next morning, and our guns demolished the battery before noon.”

“ Were the dreams regular or just occasionally ? ”

“ Every night I went into the German lines. I heard the soldiers talk and I knew what they were talking about ; but what’s the use ? When I found myself laughed at, I shut my mouth.”

“ Did you ever talk to the Germans ? ”

“ No, I never talked anywhere in my dreams, except at St. Christophe.”

“ Tell me about that, please. I am tremendously interested.”

“ Well,” he said as he lit a cigarette, “ that

is something of no interest to anyone but myself. It had nothing to do with the army at all, and—and—well, I would rather not talk about it."

I did not press him. By a few questions I learned that he knew nothing whatever of spiritualism or the cult called by that name. I told him of Bergson's theory of dreams. He had no theory of his own, but Bergson's did not appeal to him.

"To call sleep 'a period of disinterestedness' explains nothing," he said, "nor does it help me much to learn from your philosopher that our dreams are merely the escape of images which have been locked up in what you call the subconscious."

"Of course," I said, "it's Bergson's guess at the riddle of dreams."

"But it's a poor guess at the riddle of my dreams."

As we discussed the matter he became less and less reticent, until finally he told me the story of St. Christophe.

II

I was born in the village of Northallerton [he said], and when I was fifteen years of age I began to have these strange dreams. I was endowed—sometimes I imagined that perhaps I was cursed—with an extraordinary love nature. The chief need of my life seemed to be a girl friend. A man or a boy is surely in for a lot of trouble if he has that kind of nature that he can fall in love with a different girl every week. That was my case.

One night in one of these dreams I went to a little village and met a girl—a very beautiful girl—and we became friends. Nothing in life was more real to me than my association with that girl. It was due to her influence that I began to improve my mind. After a few months it began to be impressed upon me that this dream must have a reality back of it. I bought a bicycle and Saturday afternoons and Sundays I visited the villages east, west, north and south of Northallerton.

Everything in my dream village was so clear that I would have known it at once. I kept up the search for years, but never found it. Our friendship grew more intimate and beautiful all the time.

The same thing happened at home as happened here. I was laughed at. Then I shut up and kept it all to myself.

The first night I was in France I spent at Ostrahove, near Boulogne, and that night I dreamed of a French village in which I became acquainted with a French girl. I could not speak a word of French, and she knew nothing of English, but we understood each other. She was a young shepherdess and looked after her father's sheep while he was at the front. Well, when I continued to visit this little village of brick houses and spend hours in the girl's company, I began to study French. The strange thing about that was that when I knew a little French I never used it with her. We continued to talk in our own language. I did not recognise a

single word she was saying, nor did this seem to disconcert me in the least.

One night when I was in a field sitting beside the girl a squadron of Gothas came over and almost demolished the village. The sheep were dispersed and the people flew from their homes. I clung to the girl, and after the bombardment we wandered among the ruins looking for her home. But we were unable to find it.

When we entered the front line trenches my dreams changed. Almost every night I was in the German trenches and dug-outs. When there I was always obsessed with fear of detection.

When we came out of the line for rest I began to visit the demolished village. The girl was the only one of her family left. They had all been scattered or killed. I helped her to fix up a temporary domicile in the kitchen of a demolished house. I cleared the debris away and uncovered the hearth. The chimney was about four feet high, and

there was an iron rod in it on which a pot could be hung. Every time I visited her I noticed that there were fewer people around. Finally, she remained alone—the sole occupant of the village.

One night when I arrived she had arranged with her own hands a little chapel. Pictures of saints were tacked to the walls—the walls were only a few feet high. In the centre of one wall was a large crucifix. She took me by the hand and made me kneel in front of it. I was silent. She was muttering prayers. Presently she turned and, taking my hands, arranged them in the attitude of prayer. I think it was the first time I had ever really prayed. I prayed for what was uppermost in my mind. I wanted to marry that girl, and appealed to God to help me.

When we got up, the girl put her hands on my shoulders, and in clear English said :

“ My dear, I am the bride of Christ.”

I was puzzled. I didn’t know what she

meant. She was smiling—oh, God ! if you could have seen that smile.

My battalion went to Abbeville. One day I was going down that long, narrow street that runs from the cathedral to the Somme when, in a stationer's window, I saw a picture. The sight of it transfixed me. It took my breath away for a moment. It was a brown photograph of a painting by Lenoir. But it was a portrait of my girl. Have you ever seen "The Shepherdess," by Lenoir ?

"No," I said, "I never have."

"Well, it's a beautiful shepherdess standing against an old tree. She has a long staff—one end on the ground, the other close against her mouth, and you would imagine at first glance that she is putting the forefinger of her left hand to her beautiful lips ; but she is just holding the shepherd's staff and looking so demure, so coy and so beautiful. The face was hers, the dress the same, and beyond is a cottage with smoke coming out of the chimney. Her sheep are around, but

the hill in the picture was strange to me. There was no hill near her village.

I bought the picture. I made inquiries about Lenoir. No one there knew anything about him. I was sure now that behind these dreams there was a background of life and reality. Strange to say, however, my dream village and my dream girl seemed to go out with the coming of this wonderful picture. After that I was engrossed in the fight. My dream peregrinations were amongst the Germans. I learned many things over there which would have been of great value, but I did not intend to be a butt of ridicule, so I kept silent.

For over a year my only consolation was that picture. Still I did not despair. How I longed to dream again ! But my dreams were of battles, intrigues, surprises and air raids only.

One day we encamped and dug in around St. Christophe. The second day the officers of my company found a comfortable place in

an old house. I heard one of the batmen describe it.

"May I have a look at that place?" I asked.

"What for?"

"Oh, just curiosity."

"When I had a look at the place a thrill of joy ran through me. It was my dream house, and St. Christophe was my dream village. Now for the dream girl!

"The very pictures were on the wall, and the crucifix before which I knelt with her, just as I had seen them. So was the kitchen. Of course it took no Sherlock Holmes intellect to reason it out—that the inhabitants, those who were not killed or taken prisoners, had gone to Ham or Amiens. I was wild with excitement. I could not sleep at all that night. I was too full of sheer joy.

"Amiens was out of the question. Ham was quite near. I took full advantage of every chance to come here. First of all I went to

the old *curé* of the parish. He was so worried and abused by the Germans when they occupied the town that he lived in a dazed condition. He examined the picture. He listened to my story. I watched his face as if my very soul's destiny depended upon the emotions that flitted across his broad features. Perhaps it did, too—who knows?

"I am not sure, my son," said the old man, "but I think this child"—child, indeed!—"attends the first Mass on Sunday mornings. I will find out for you."

"I could have gathered the old chap in my arms and kissed him. That was Friday afternoon. I told him I would come on Monday. After I left him I traversed every foot of those streets of Ham. I gazed into the eyes of every girl I met. I peered in doors and windows. I showed the picture to a newsvendor. He shook his head. I went to the depot and showed it to the station-master. He showed it to a porter; the porter thought he had seen her in town.

I could speak French with ease now, and I made all my inquiries in that language. The porter promised to help me to find her. I promised him a hundred francs if he was successful. The station-master suggested the post office. Ah, I hadn't thought of that ! To the post office I went and presented the picture.

"Madam, do you know that face ? "

"*Oui, m'sieur !* That is Germaine Moreau. But, *mon Dieu*, where did she have such a picture taken ? "

"Do you know her address ? "

"Y-e-s, but—"

"Will you let me have it, please ? "

"M'sieur, she is a holy maid—to be a Sister of Mercy—she doesn't want to know soldiers."

"Madam," I retorted hotly, "when your Poilus put on the new uniform of La Belle France, do they cease to be men ? I am an Englishman, fighting for France. I ask for courtesy only ! "

“*Je vous demande mille pardons, m’sieur !*”

I got the address and I found my dream girl! She was sitting at a low window, sewing, and the moment she saw me she came and opened the door.

“*Germaine !*”

“*Armand !*”

“My name is not Armand,” I said, as she reached both her hands out to me.

“Your name is Edmund,” she said, “but I have changed it to Armand !”

“*Oh !*”

“Yes, it is better, and then I alone use it ! Come in !”

“Her story was not unlike the stories of thousands of French peasants. Her father died in action. Her mother and two sisters were killed in an air raid; two sisters had disappeared. She lived with her aged and crippled grandmother. The strangest thing in all this is that she had never been conscious of my presence in St. Christophe. She only knew me in the British trenches when she

came in her dream life to visit me. She had no recollection of telling me that she was the bride of Christ. For a moment I was full of joy, but joy that was short-lived. St. Catherine—whatever she may be—had warned her in a vision that her friendship was to be of the spirit. She had set her face towards the convent and was spending most of her life in preparation.

“When I produced my Lenoir she was astonished at the likeness, but had never posed for a painting. She was filled with wonder when I told the story of my dream visits. Then I made my plea in the name, not of any saint, but in the name of *Le Bon Dieu*, and a month later she gave me her love and a promise to share my life. We are going to help rebuild St. Christophe ! ”

III

On March 20th I addressed the officers and non-commissioned officers of a brigade of the Ulster Division at St. Christophe.

The story of the previous day, told me on the ramparts of the fortress, had filled me with a deep sense of things mystical and beyond my ken. I wandered around the ruins and in mental images reproduced the scenes described. Then I set out on foot for Ham.

Passing through St. Sulpice, I overtook the mystic rifleman. I was to address a thousand men in the Ham theatre in the evening, and my friend said he would be present. It was an enthusiastic gathering, and before I got off the platform it was decided that I should give another address on the following Sunday in the same place.

General Abbott waited for me in the corridor and we walked together through the streets of Ham. A few minutes after the General had turned a corner, a hand was laid on my shoulder. I turned and faced my friend the dreamer.

"I have but a minute," he said, "but I

thought I must see you—just to say au revoir and a word of warning."

"Thank you!" I said, and I turned and walked with him toward his camp.

"You will never speak there again," he began; "by this time to-morrow death, hell and chaos will reign supreme."

"Hardly as bad as that, old man!" I said. "Death, yes; hell, too, but neither one nor the other can ever be supreme. Life is and will continue to be supreme."

"Yes," he said, "you are right—and then, the spirit of man is indestructible!"

His last word as we parted on the road to Clastres was "Cheerio!"

Next morning, at four, I was awakened by the thunder of the guns. The old château where I was billeted rocked in the first shock of the barrage—a barrage in which the enemy used a hundred guns to every thousand yards of his front. In a few minutes we knew that the long-expected German push had begun. The town of Ham was alive at

dawn. Only a few days ago the streets were ablaze with flags and bunting in celebration of the anniversary of its liberation by the French from the hands of the Hun. Now the people were instinctively on the move again. All the troops not actually in the fight at that minute were standing by. The civilians were war-hardened. Camp followers, soldiers and civilians were going about their duties very much as usual. Later in the morning the London and Paris papers of the day before were on sale as usual, and soldiers read them as they went along the narrow streets. They were reading the war news printed in London! I passed a Chinese labour group at work. They were dodging shells, and I laughed as they dodged on the wrong side of the trees! They didn't seem to know where the shells were coming from. Bursting shrapnel bespattered the roofs of the houses. With a whistling, hissing scream a shell buried itself in the ground. It was a dud. Men laughed and joked over it.

I was due at the H.Q. of the 50th Division at Harboniers at noon. I left Ham in a car at ten. It was a beautiful day. The sun was shining brightly. As we sped along toward Peronne I noticed the care with which the crops had been planted and were being cared for. A huge motor-tractor was at work in a field. A Tommy sat on the seat smoking a cigarette as calmly as if he was going to be there all summer. The magpies were active in spring house-hunting and domestic affairs. A lark was bursting with song overhead, platoons of swallows lined the telegraph wires, and as we passed a stranded tank I saw two birds inspecting it from the roof—probably looking for a self-contained flat for a family that was as yet but a mental image.

Along that stretch of road from Ham to Peronne there was an atmosphere of peace and quiet—quiet save for the roar of the guns in what proved to be the prelude to the most violent gun-fire and ruthless butchery of human life in the history of war.

As I sat at luncheon with a brigadier and his staff at Harboniers, a major entered and said : "The 50th Division must be entrained in thirty minutes, sir."

"Can it be done ? "

"Yes, sir."

Looking at me with a smile, the brigadier said : "The Boche has evidently made some slight alterations in our programme—you will return after the show ! "

The return journey was a memorable one. The battle had been raging for eight hours. The sun was shining just as brightly, the birds were still as happy and unconcerned, but the road was different. From Harboniers to Peronne and from Peronne to Ham there were two streams of traffic—one going, the other coming. Every available truck, lorry and omnibus carried men and materials to the front. The stream we met was a stream, thirty miles long, of ambulances bringing back the broken bodies of men.

On each side of the road the cavalry

reserves were drawn up in the fields. Where that mighty host came from was a mystery. They seemed to arise out of the ground. One field of fifty acres was a solid phalanx of lances shimmering in the sunlight. The men stood by their horses, bridles in hand, awaiting the call to enter the valley of death—only a few kilometres north of the road. In the sunken road was the reserve of guns and gunners. And as they waited they chatted and laughed as if they were on the plains of Aldershot.

"Good luck, lads!" I said over and over as we came along, and from each group within the sound of my voice came the cheering response: "Cheerio!"

There were times when words failed me and when even sight was dim. What would I not have given if I could have surrendered my place in that car to many a father whose boy was there, so that for the last time he could have heard that voice! All along that long way I seemed to hear them say: "We who are about to die, cry 'Cheerio!'"

And all this has to do with the shepherdess of St. Christophe and her dream lover. It was their day—their day of destiny. His unit was in the thick of it. The civil population were ordered to entrain for Amiens or anywhere out of the pathway of the avalanche. I was with the wounded all that evening and all that long, bloody night. I watched the French people of Ham as they hurried in crowds to the station. I peered into their faces in the hope of seeing a face every lineament of which was firmly imprinted on my mind. I looked for “an aged and crippled woman,” but I looked in vain.

Dawn came, and with it the renewal of the tempest of molten metal, poison gas, high explosives, and the loud, nerve-racking crescendo under which the earth trembled like an aspen leaf. When the wounded had been hurried back to casualty clearing stations I helped to entrain the last of the civil population. There was one flickering ray of hope. An old, broken-hipped, white-haired woman

came along, dragging behind her a sheet in which she had tied up what she could not do without. I ran along to meet her. I took the bundle and placed it on a seat in the train. Then I took her in my arms as I would a baby and placed her beside the bundle. She put her long arms around my neck and, kissing my cheek, said : "Ah, Monsieur Tommy!" But, alas, she was not the guardian of the shepherdess.

Perhaps after all the whole thing was a dream. Was I also dreaming ? I could hardly tell. Every time I thought of the dream lovers I felt myself lapsing into deep reverie. It was all so mystical—so far away beyond the common experiences of men and women.

As time sped on the tension of interest grew less and less, but never wholly passed away. I don't think it ever will. To the goal of final information I tracked along a circuitous pathway, but I finally arrived.

The dream lover fell in the first onslaught

of the great cataclysm, and he lies there now between Clastres and St. Christophe in the valley where he first sat beside the gentle shepherdess as she watched her flock.

Long months afterwards, when the Angel of Peace was spreading her wings over a war-weary world, I knocked at a convent gate and pronounced the name Germaine Moreau.

"Yes, she is here," the Mother Superior said, "but she has finished with the world, monsieur."

I think of her sometimes and, as I see her kneeling before a crucifix, I see kneeling beside her a British soldier to whom, having joined the choir invisible, dreams are no longer a mystery.

"Never doubted clouds would break."

Browning.

I

WHEN the war began he was a young salesman in Toronto. He joined up at once and was among the first from Canada to enter France. In two years he had gradually risen from private to captain. When he was a recruit in a Canadian camp they dubbed him "Sunny Jim," and the name clung to him. He was a broad-shouldered, round-faced, husky sort of fellow, and gave one the impression that he was an expurgated edition of a lumberjack from the North-West, or a coal-heaver thinly disguised. His round face was always wreathed in smiles, and the smile was as contagious as the measles.

I was to speak at Bramshott one winter's

night, and while I was warming the machinery up with a cup of tea behind the Y.M. counter, he jumped on the platform and started the crowd singing. He started in with "Cock Robin," and wound up his end of the show with "Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag." When I stepped on the platform and took a seat, he stopped the singing and, pointing to me, said: "The choir will sing the next verse *alone*."

I didn't know him then. He didn't know me. I possess a singing voice which is guaranteed to do one of two things—either empty the house in five minutes, or engender a riot! I can't sing. When the crowd stopped he turned and bowed to me. I arose and solemnly announced that the choir was on strike!

"Can you dance?" he asked.

"No!"

"Can you whistle?"

"For a dog—yes!"

"Whistle!" he said, and the crowd roared with laughter.

I whistled and the audience screamed. He

announced another song, and while the audience were singing with gusto he came over and whispered to me :

"Do you see that man at the door with the stove-pipe hat on ? "

"Yes."

"He's a theological secret service man, sniffing for heresy—beware ! "

At the close of the meeting he took me by the arm and, leading me to the door, introduced me to the man with the tall hat. He was Lady Clinton's coachman—her ladyship was selling Woodbines behind the counter !

To Sunny Jim war was as grim a business as it was to the most serious of soldiers. He had experienced all its hardships and privations. He had served in the ranks ; he had been a non-commissioner. He was now an officer, but in all these grades he was something more. He was a man—a robust, red-blooded, fighting man. The men instinctively knew this and loved him. The old army discipline was based on fear. The new was different and produced as good results. It

was based on love, consideration and mutual comradeship.

A high ecclesiastical potentate in the Canadian Army, when told frankly that he was an autocrat, exclaimed : "God is an autocrat." But he might have been reminded that God was not a signpost in a stock collar, pointing the way but never going himself !

Sunny Jim had a different idea about God —just as he had his own idea of discipline. He never talked about these things very much—he just lived them.

Out in France, when there was a trench to dig, he showed the men how to do it by digging. He had no use for frills and fur-belowss. Make-believe he despised. When the comfort of his men had been looked after he looked after his own—never before. He knew personally every man in his company. He knew where every man lived when at home. He had a little book in which he kept their home addresses. He jotted down notes of moods and peculiarities. He knew what each of his men had earned a living at

in Canada. The consequence was that in a few months each man considered himself singled out by his captain for special consideration. But Sunny Jim had no favourites. He was alike to all of them. He knew that the human soul craved for sympathy and recognition from the cradle to the grave, and these souls were, for the time being, under his special care and guidance.

In danger he was a tower of strength. Only a fool is an utterly fearless man. Sunny Jim was no fool, but when shells were wrecking trenches and bombs dropping from the air, he knew that he could instil strength by example.

When his division came out of the line for two weeks' rest, he could invent more new forms of amusement and recreation than all the other officers combined. If a chaplain failed to turn up at a religious meeting, he could be called upon at a minute's notice to fill the gap. If a lecturer or a concert party failed to materialise, he was the one man who could get up a show without notice—and it was always a good show, for he had

a knack of pulling out of men the best that was in them.

The captain's immediate superior was a major—a dug-out—who had been in the old regular army. You can tell an old regular a mile off—but you can't tell him much! He maintained that no man could be popular in the army and be loyal to army discipline. There were times when the captain knew that this questionable proposition was enunciated for his special benefit, but he could not be drawn into an argument about it. He was delightfully impersonal and detached from the little flies of personal jealousy that spoil the ointment of good-fellowship.

Finally the major cornered him and pinned him down to an avowal of a military creed.

"I am too acutely conscious of my own shortcomings," he said, "to give less than a respectful and loyal consideration to all your demands for a stricter form of discipline, but if you won't feel offended I can not only tell you what I feel but what all Canadians feel about it."

"That's exactly what I'm driving at," said the major.

"I may be doing you an injustice; I will be glad to be put right if I am, but much of what you call discipline is to me unadulterated bunkum. Discipline to me is that which keeps an army at its maximum fighting ability. That means care of the body, care of the mind, and a co-operation that gives a maximum of unity and a minimum of friction.

"The old army was composed of men who were on the scrapheap of industry—misfits in the social order. To have three square meals a day, things to wear and a cover over their heads, was a godsend. That sort of material could be whipped into shape by fear. Well fed and well cared for, they made good fighters.

"In that sense we Canadians are not soldiers at all! We are in uniform for a vastly different reason. We are not Englishmen. Hunger as a driving force is unknown to us. We are a nation within the British Empire, owing allegiance to the King. We

are civilians in uniform. We are short on heel-clicking, and our pancake salute leaves much to be desired ; we may be a button loose or short here and there, but we have a firm conviction that in this temporary occupation of fighting Germans we have little, if anything, to learn from any soldiers on earth ! ”

“ That sounds Canadian, all right,” said the major.

“ True, sir,” said the captain, “ and Colonial ! ”

“ Didn’t we teach you all you know of the game ? ”

“ Yes, sir, and your English ancestors taught the American colonies all they know of the game. But life consists not in what one knows but in the use one makes of knowledge ! ”

II

No man can be attached to any branch of the regular army long without finding out that there exists such a thing as tradition —an unwritten body of opinion which has

been handed down from one generation of soldiers to another. It is the unwritten law. This tradition must be discovered by each man for himself. Wherever two or three regulars are found, there is the tradition in the midst of them. Few armies have no traditions. It was absent from the Air Service. A half-baked or a temporary gentleman may live up to the letter of the Army Regulations and at the same time be an utter misfit in his group. I have never known an intensely theological man in the Service who was not given a wide berth by his fellow-officers. The reason is simple. Religious zeal of a theological type puts a dent in the tradition. The zealot won't mix. Tradition says he shall. Tradition puts a ban on the drunkard, but it equally frowns on the bore, the ever-righteous and the Holy Willies who are invisible most of the time and incomprehensible all the time.

The major was the physical embodiment of the tradition. Sunny Jim didn't know it from a hole in the ground, but he mixed. The major liked him because he saw through

him and believed in him. His religion was of the variety that mixes. Officers no less than the men liked to see him around. He was a sure cure for the blues. He was a born story-teller, and had an apparently inexhaustible repertoire of funny stories—clean stories—stories he could tell to women and children as easily as to fighting men. He was no *poseur*. He never told stories for effect. It is quite possible to do all that and be shallow. Sunny Jim was a thinker. The major discovered that, but he had to dig for it with a mental pickaxe! The men discovered it, and when troubled they laid bare to him their inmost thoughts. At courts martial he was “the friend of the accused.” Men dying in hospital said to their nurses: “Ask Captain — to write a note to my mother—he has her address in his little book.”

“Boys,” he said to his company one morning, “I am going to London on ten days’ furlough—if there is anything I can attend to over there for you, let me know before six o’clock to-night.”

Amongst those who came was a private named Hawkins, who had a young wife in Chelsea. It would be a sort of joyful surprise to her if the captain would just call in and tell her how her husband was !

“ Nothing would give him greater pleasure.”

When he returned, he took Hawkins for a walk. They walked for a mile and then sat down to have a smoke. He had something to say to Hawkins—something that wiped the smile from the joyful face of Sunny Jim.

“ Hawkins,” he said, “ if I didn’t know you were a stronger and better man than I am, I wouldn’t tell you this—I would delegate it to someone else.”

“ Good God, sir ! she’s not dead—is she ? ”

“ No, old man ; in that case it would be easy to tell you ! It’s worse than death ! ” And as the young fellow shook with sobs, his captain told, in broken accents, a story of unfaithfulness, and day after day, and week after week, he kept close to Hawkins and built a bridge over which a heart-broken man walked away from his difficulty.

"Hawkins, you are a wonder to me!" he said, three months later, when the wounded heart was healing and the man had reached an approximately normal condition. "If it had happened to me, I would have gone to pieces—I certainly would!"

"But for you, sir," said Hawkins, "I would have done something desperate. You held me steady, sir; and when I saw you look sad, I knew you were thinking of me, and I was ashamed to have my sorrow printed on your face!"

It was quite inevitable that such a man's reputation should travel beyond the confines of his compound. There were calls for his services from all over the Canadian forces and from G.H.Q., but nothing—no inducement was strong enough to get him out of his unit.

Conventional religion had failed. The real thing was rare. Before every great push there were always a large number of men who asked for some sort of religious service, and on all such occasions there were requests for Sunny Jim! They wanted him to wind up all such affairs with a word of cheer! He

was as far removed in temperament from the office of a priest as one can imagine. "Cure of Souls" is a phrase that fitted him to a nicety.

One night, the Y.M. man called upon him to fill a gap caused by the non-appearance of a great evangelist who had been marooned somewhere. Of all the things he was asked to do, this sort of thing was the least attractive. He never refused, but he had a notion that his sort of religious service was a severe strain on the orthodox conscience. He never talked about God. He always said: "The Father." Jesus to him was always "The Master." And when these names were pronounced there was an ineffable tenderness in his voice that would instantly give a dug-out or a cellar the spiritual atmosphere of a cathedral.

On this particular evening, in France, he made the men select the hymns. In the singing, he would point to a row of seats and make the occupants stand and sing a line. If he detected a good voice anywhere, he would call upon the owner to sing a verse.

That method goes very well in singing, but when applied to prayer it limps a little.

“ You lead us in prayer ! ” he said, pointing to a man he knew nothing whatever about.

“ I can’t,” said the man.

“ Yes, you can ! ” he said.

“ Impossible, sir,” said the man.

“ Aren’t you on speaking terms with the Father ? ”

“ No ! ”

“ What has He done to you ? ”

“ Nothing.”

“ I thought not. Now, look here, chaps, I knew nothing about this meeting until half an hour ago. Now I know all about it—this chap has given me the cue ; the purpose of this meeting is to get on speaking terms with the Father. Let’s bow our heads in prayer.”

Everybody bowed. There was a silence they could almost hear. Then he spoke, and his voice had a caressing sweetness in it.

“ Now, lad, stand up and talk to your Father ! ”

The man stood up, but he didn't pray. He couldn't. The silence was painful. Every man in that hut knew that the man was weeping—and scores of them, strong men all, wept silently with him! Some men around the door stole stealthily out. They couldn't bear to be seen with tears in their eyes.

"Father," Sunny Jim began in prayer, in that soft, appealing voice of his, "we want to get on better speaking terms with You! But we are all tongue-tied, and then we are cursed with the miserable remembrance that we haven't played the game!" Then he paused—it was only a pause of a few seconds, but it seemed an hour—"Now, fellows, let's keep our heads bowed and every man in the hut repeat with me"; and what they repeated was:

"Father, we want to get on better speaking terms with You!"

It was repeated twice. There were husky, broken voices, too. Then he stepped off

the platform and walked towards the door. In the middle of the hut he stopped and, turning around, said :

“ All right, chaps, the meeting is over ! ”

III

In the old army, when we came out of a battle and called the roll, we used to say : “ Strange, isn’t it, that the best men are always snuffed out first ! ” We said the same thing in all wars, and especially in this one. It wasn’t always true. It was merely one way of expressing our appreciation and sorrow.

Captain —— wasn’t killed, but in one of the most terrific struggles the Canadians ever engaged in he was badly wounded and lay in a shell-hole a night and a forenoon. It was true in this case, and gloom overspread the battalion. He went to England, where he pulled through all right, but three months elapsed before he rejoined the battalion. When he wrote to the C.O. that he was all right, the C.O. did an extraordinary thing. He read the letter to the battalion. In the

old army that was unthinkable ; tradition would have scowled ! New armies make their own traditions, and the men cheered ! The men had been through some rough shows, and the C.O. knew that the letter would buck them up !

After the reading of the letter, the old major whispered something to the C.O. He wanted him to say something, and the C.O. told him to make the announcement himself. He did. "Men," he said, "there is something squeamish and maudlin about the nickname of Captain — ; the C.O. agrees with me, and while his name isn't Jim at all, let us call him when he returns 'Captain Jim.'" The men cheered again.

In the meantime something had happened to Captain Jim. Nobody knew anything about it until he rejoined the battalion. It was a high explosive in matters social. Captain Jim returned to France a married man ! Other men had married and no one seemed to care very much one way or another, but anything that happened to him was of importance to every man in the battalion.

He had a great reception. The old major sent couriers on a still hunt for rice, but failing in that, he got a bag of barley, and the ancient and honourable idiocy was perpetrated on the wily Benedict.

There was a mess dinner. The dining-room—which was a mud-hole—was gorgeously decorated. Several sections of the military code had been roughly mauled in order to put on the necessary swank. In replying to the speeches, which were numerous and lengthy, Captain Jim said : “ Gentlemen, when a newly-married man shouts off the old saw about his wife being the finest and most beautiful woman in the whole world, he is usually greeted with a loud laugh. I have been guilty of that myself, *but in my case it's the solemn truth!* [Loud laughter.] Yes, I thought so. But, gentlemen, you haven't seen her ! Oh ! by the way, do you know why I curtailed the usually long-drawn-out preliminaries ? I'll tell you, honestly ; because it's as natural to fall in love with her as to breathe—and—and—there are so many men love-hungry and

thirsty, and only one woman of her loveliness in the universe ! [Laughter.] I lost no time—not a day ! It was no walk-over, I assure you. It was the battle of my life; but I won, and now I am the happiest man alive ! [Laughter.] Light up, gentlemen, light up and pass around the dixies, for when the Boche has yelled ‘Kamarad’ for the last time and we are marching past Buckingham Palace, I will be whispering to you the last few sentences of the introduction—the speech goes on for ever ! ” [Loud and prolonged laughter.]

The speech stopped abruptly at that moment, for a thousand men surrounded the dug-out and serenaded the speaker. To them he expressed his gratitude, but he was more serious—serious for Captain Jim. Hawkins was in that crowd, and the captain had a way of putting himself in another man’s place and looking at things from the other angle. To Hawkins alone, later, he exhibited the photographs of his bride, and revealed the fact that the marriage had taken place quietly because of difficulties. “ Of course,”

he said, "when the show is over, these little things will be straightened out—then, old man, you must come and spend an evening with us!"

"And console myself by looking at the happiest couple in the world," said Hawkins, smiling.

"Well," Captain Jim said, "the mess have just been laughing uproariously because I told them that, but I was never more serious in my life. That's how both of us look at it."

"Great!" exclaimed Hawkins; "and long may it continue, sir."

To the casual looker-on, Captain Jim was his old self again. Jubilant as ever, doing his routine duty and a thousand things besides. To the critical eye of the old major, this love episode had given him a new lease of life over the wreckage wrought by a bullet in his chest. It made the old veteran very tender and, with a strong kindly interest, he took a lot of things—useless things—off the young man's shoulders.

All the world falls in love with a lover,

and from the captain's blue eyes the love light was seldom absent. Men read in those eyes what they themselves stood most in need of. Nor could he keep this new happiness out of his speech. It made him more of a boy, and in boyish enthusiasm he talked of his bride and outlined his dreams of the days to come—the days of peace.

In the censoring of letters, the word "Miss" made him pause before reading it.

"Is this a love-letter?" he would say to a man whom he had observed put it on the pile.

"Yes, sir."

"You do solemnly swear——" with a humorous twinkle.

"Yes, sir."

"Seal it up yourself!"

He was not only in love—he was in love with love. The birds had a new interest for him. He noticed the procession of the flowers as they struggled for existence in the shell-pitted region through which the armies were fighting their way. The white fleecy

clouds scurrying over the blue sky had a new meaning.

In the absence of the *padre*, one afternoon, he read the burial service over four men, killed by a shell, in a time of comparative peace. He closed the book and, looking at those gathered around, said :

“ Experience out here dries up in us the fountain of tears. Tears do not become us, anyway. These comrades are alive for ever. We will feel sad for the vacant places and the hurt hearts in our homeland beyond the seas, but we cannot feel sorrow for them. In death what a catalogue of things we escape ! Who knows what anguish lies in front of him ; what heartaches of deep regret and disappointment ? Fellows, these men are not here, they are with the Father ! ”

To the Canadians it was given to retake Mons. How they went to the job is history. In the taking of a village, Captain Jim led his men in the attack. About seventy-five of the men who had listened to that simple funeral oration over the four comrades went

west, and with them Captain Jim—shot through the heart.

The following afternoon there was a lull in the line. Jenkins—Captain Jim's batman—seeing the old major alone, approached him.

"'Ere's some letters, sir, w'at come in by th' post this mornin'. An' if you'll hexcuse me, sir, if I sai so, there's one w'at maybe should not be sent to 'is folks."

"You read it!"

"Yes, sir—censor left it open."

The major read it and the colour left his bronzed face.

"My God! My God!" was all he said. Then, turning to the batman, he said: "Jenkins, I'm a strict believer in law and discipline, but if you ever open your mouth about the contents of that letter, I will take the law into my own hands and shoot you as dead as a maggot!"

But Jenkins wasn't listening; his body shook and heaved with sobs, and the tears coursed down his cheeks.

The war is over now and the fighting men

are dispersed to the four corners of the earth. By the roadside, near Mons, there is a simple little cross, simply inscribed :

CAPTAIN JIM
LOVED BY EVERYBODY

And the letter he never saw gave the story of a sorrow he never knew :

Dear ——,

God forgive me ! I have deceived you. I know it will break your heart, not to lose me for ever, but to discover by this note that I was a liar and a fraud. If I only had to confess to you that I am a married woman, there might be a chance, but I am worse than that. To return to my husband and cut you out of my life for ever is the only and the kindest thing I can do for you. Good-bye, good-bye for ever.

Minnie.

" God, shall we ever forget !
Beaten and broke in the fight
But sticking it—sticking it yet."

Conan Doyle.

I

THE ban on photography during the war was inexorable and inexplicable. It was perhaps inevitable, but there is a difference of opinion about that. It is hard to understand why the commander of a division of British soldiers was not allowed a photographer. Tens of thousands of pictures of the utmost value and of profound historical interest were lost for ever. There was official photography, but it concerned itself with things of least importance. The Canadians were not so hampered, and the Americans less hampered still, but all of them missed the things that were unique and of the greatest value—not perhaps from

a military point of view, but from the human, artistic and historical.

How multitudinous are the pictures stored up in the chambers of imagery ! But they gradually fade away and become like dreams one would like to remember but cannot.

I never longed for a camera so much as one day in Pissy, on the Somme. I was addressing the 7th Queen's. The sun was shining, but there was a stiff breeze that plays havoc with the human voice. What a picture that battalion presented ! They sat on the walls of a ruined house, on the ground, on fences. One of those long, two-wheeled, old French carts was drawn up for a platform. When I warmed up in action, the old thing began to see-saw and wriggle. Brigadier-General Wood, the heaviest man in the brigade, came over and planted himself on one shaft. The men laughed—we all laughed. But the cart still wriggled. Then Colonel Buchell, V.C., came over and sat on the other shaft and two subalterns sat down beside him. We laughed again. Buchell was one of the great personalities of the British Army, and

a braver man never wore a British uniform ! It was when he sat down I longed for the picture. I wanted it also for the Brigadier's sake, for I loved him, too, as all his men did. The Division was going into action. This was the message that was to ring in their ears as they wound up the affairs of the old world and ushered in the new. Never have I been so honoured as when Buchell arose and called for cheers ! I hear those cheers now. I shall hear them until I lose touch and correspondence with all that we call life. A week later half of those men had gone west, and Buchell went with them. But in the lives of those who knew him he still lives—he shall live for ever.

II

I addressed four battalions that day, and between the third and fourth I went off to a clump of trees in search of quiet for an hour. As I entered the grove I saw three Tommies sitting chatting. I joined them, but as diplomatically as possible made them do most of the talking.

"What was the saddest sight you have seen in the war?" I asked Pendleton of the Buffs.

That produced three sad stories. Evans of the Queen's was the reticent one of the three, but he blossomed forth when I asked him to tell the story of his funniest experience. He told the story of the tin whistle and the toy drum. I had heard it before, but no gentleman ever makes that confession. Good stories have a way of adding to themselves. Unlike the proverbial rolling stone, they gather moss and other lichens.

A unique experience happening to a dozen men at the same time and place will produce twelve versions—at least. The marrow and bones of the story are the same in all versions. Only the complexion changes in the telling. I like the Evans version best. He was there and unconsciously reproduced much of the original emotions.

The day was warm. A slight breeze blew through the trees, and the men had loosened their tunics in order to get the full benefit of it. We lit up and settled ourselves. Evans

lit up also, and it was between the puffs of half a dozen Woodbines that he unfolded the tale.

III

" Jerry 'ad broken through on our right an' left. We wasn't cut off, as ye might say, but we 'adn't no idea when we might be. We'd bin fightin' three days and nights, an' for two days 'ad no grub—not a bloomin' morsel. Most of our hofficers were dead or wounded. The C.O. was a youngster with one lone pip on 'is shoulder-strap—a good lad an' a proper gentleman all right, but rather 'elpless in a touch show. There was about two 'undred or so of us 'an the leftenant couldn't manage the boys nohow. Of course we was dead tired out an' fed up.

" ' Mr. Boche'll be 'ere in 'alf a hour,' 'e says, ' an' we'll be done in if we don't move toot sweet.'

" Well, we did maike an heffort an' marched two kilometres to a town w'ich 'ad been battered t' 'ell. We throw'd our kits down on the square an', by gum ! lay down on top of 'em—there wasn't a kick left in a man of us.

" Jerry was pepperin' shells hover all th' time, but we didn't care a 'ang ; we couldn't move out of th' way if they'd been 'aystacks. 'Unger a man can put up with for a couple of days, but w'en 'e ain't got a bloomin' fag to smoke th' jig's up.

" We—I means a few on us—nosed aroun' for water. W'en we found it, th' 'ole pack made a run for it. Animals at the Zoo at feedin'-time wasn't a circumstance to it ! Th' C.O. pulled 'is revolver an' said 'e'd shoot ; we didn't care. There wasn't as much discipline left as ye'd find in a 'en-roost. Besides, we know'd there wasn't a live cartridge among the lot of us.

" We 'ad no motor-cycle, no 'orse, nothin' to maike a break to th' rear on, t' sort of communicate with the rest of th' Division. Th' C.O. 'ad th' wind up ; we 'ad it up as bad, but nobody wasn't givin' hisself away—not us. It was like a bad dose of sea-sickness —w'en at first ye fear ye're goin' to peg out, an' then ye fear ye ain't !

" Th' sergeant-major was one of these 'ere 'igh almightyies of th' old harmy. 'E was

more himpressed with good 'eel-clickin' than with straight shootin'. Oh, 'e was a bird! 'E fussed about an' sort of 'inted that an hexample should be made of some of us. 'E threw a bluff, but it weren't no good. Nothin' doin'. We jest grinned an' carried on. Gaw lumme! We was a pickle, an' no mistake!

" You can figure it out for yourselves, w'en I tells you that I've seen fellahs crack jokes w'en they was rippin' th' insides out of Jerry in 'is own trenches! There wasn't a bloomin' joke, there wasn't a blasted smile on a man's faice anywhere. W'en the C.O. 'ad jest about given up th' ghost, a maijor turns up from somewhere.

" ' W'at's up 'ere ? ' 'e says.

" ' These men are done in, sir,' says the C.O. ' We've been in th' show for three days, an' there ain't a kick left in a man of 'em ! '

" ' Done in be damned ! ' says the maijor. ' Th' Boche is hadvancin' like blazes an' will be 'ere in 'alf a hour ! '

" ' We're hat your service, sir,' says the C.O., salutin' an' clickin' 'is 'eels.

" ' H-m-m,' says the maijor, strokin' 'is

Charlie Chaplin, an' sizin' us up like. Then 'e took out 'is cigarette-case an' while 'e was tappin' th' butt end of his fag on th' case, th' C.O.'s mouth was a-waterin'.

"' Ave you one t' spare, sir ? ' says 'e, 'umble as a raw recruit.

"' Out of cigarettes, too ? ' says the maijor.

"' Out of everything, sir.'

"' Eavens ! '

" Up comes a bloke, an', takin' 'is life in 'is 'and, salutes an' says, ' Ye don't happen t'ave another t' spare, sir ? '

"' What d'ye take me for ? ' says 'e— 'a quartermaster-sergeant or a Y.M.C.A. ? '

"' No, sir,' says th' bloke—' jest a hofficer an' a gentleman ! '

"' H-m-m ! ' says th' maijor, lookin' us hover.

" Up comes five more, then ten, then fifty, an' we stood there a-gaspin' an' a-chokin' for a puff of a bloomin' fag.

IV

"' Sit down,' says 'e, ' sit down in a row an' I'll perform a miracle ; but for Gawd's

sike don't wake them chaps up wot's sleepin' or th' miracle won't come orf.'

"Down we sits in a row, in two rows, like we used to sit at Sunday-school picnics for our buns an' lemonade. We forgot for a jiffy our haches an' pains, our bleedin' feet, our hempty stomachs an' our hachin' backs. If 'e'd been goin' to give out V.C.'s it wouldn't 'ave been 'alf as hinterestin'. 'Ow many fags 'ad 'e? We wondered. 'Ow could 'e string out 'alf a dozen over a battalion?

"'Chaps,' says the maijor, 'I want to hoffer a few words of advice on the evils of tobacco.'

"We laughed. "'Ere goes some leg-pullin'," says I to m'self.

"'Th' other day,' says 'e, 'I was censorin' a chap's letter to 'is mother. She'd ast 'im w'at Woodbines was, an' 'e was a-tellin' th' simple-earted old laidy that they was th' last thing 'e enjoyed before goin' over th' top, th' first thing 'e wanted w'en 'e returned; they was crutches to lean on convalescin', an' 'elpt' digestion w'en overfed like you chaps 'ave been; a ration of food w'en there was

nothin' else t' eat. They wasn't part of 'is kit, but a necessity of life, an' elp to reflection w'en 'e 'ad time t' think, an' a consolation in despair. They was token of good-fellowship between princes an' peasants; an' as for winnin' th' war—w'y, hammuniton wasn't alf so himportant. W'at d'ye think of that rot, chaps ?'

" ' Fine ! ' we all yelled out.

" ' I tell you, chaps, fags is rank poison ! They're only fit for burnin', an' 'ere is a bunch w'ich I'm a-goin' t' burn right now—*one at a time !*'

" ' Let's 'elp,' says we.

" ' Righto ! ' says th' majör. ' But we've got to perform this 'ere miracle decently an' in order. Now then. I starts at number one. 'E lights and takes one puff and 'ands it t' number two; number two tikes a puff and 'ands it t' number three, an' so on down th' line. I've got eleven fags; they should be enough for two 'undred men, an' a basketful of butts for Jerry, who is due 'ere in about fifteen minutes ! '

" Gaw lumme, chaps, if you'd seen that

cigarette miracle ! W'en the first fag 'ad reached number five, th' maijor 'anded another to number one, and blime if them 'ere eleven fags didn't go the rounds of over a 'undred men. It was a gaime of touch an' go all the time—an' as hinterestin' as a county cricket match !

v

"The maijor disappeared—an' 'is 'igh mightiness, th' sergeant-major, begun to bluster an' puff aroun' a-tryin' to buck us up, but the more 'e ollered th' less we cared. We took no more notice than if 'e was a mule clearin' 'is throat.

"All this time th' maijor was a-scroungin' aroun' 'ere an' there among th' looted shops and big 'ouses w're Jerry's hofficers was billeted in th' hearly part of th' war. W'en 'e found w'at 'e was a-looking for, out 'e comes. 'Oly smokes ! w'at a comical sight 'e was—a regular 'oly show. You couldn't himagine in a million years 'ow 'e was a-rigged out. In this 'ere —— war we've 'eard ten thousand sorts of sounds we've never 'eard before nor never will again—least, we 'opes

not. 'Ere was a bran'-new sound—two new sounds—a tin whistle an' a toy drum ! Th' maijor 'ad stuffed a harmy blanket or two inside 'is tunic. It made a 'uge 'ump jest at the bottom button, an' on th' 'ump sat th' little toy drum, the size of 'is 'ead, an' 'e was a-thumpin' of it with a pair of big regular sort of drum-sticks. Beside 'im was a hundersized, squint-eyed chap a-playin' th' tin whistle an' a-goose-steppin' beside th' maijor, 'oo looked like a stuffed giraffe with a cap w'at barely covered th' crown of 'is big 'ead. Lumme, we laughed and roar'd an' laughed till our sides cracked ! W'at a pair o' chumps !

" All th' sleepers awoke an' stared an' bust out laughin' too. Then th' 'ooligan band stopped in front an' th' maijor says :

" ' Chaps,' says 'e, ' if ye've got a favourite chune,' says 'e, ' oller it out an' we'll do our best to haccommodeate ye ! '

" ' Shall we meet beyond the river ! ' 'ollers a bloke.

" ' Yes,' says 'e, ' every damned one on ye, if ye ain't out of 'ere in ten minutes ! '

Then 'e gives th' wink t' th' tin whistle man
an' they struck up th' *Dead March*. Lumme,
we laughed till th' tears blinded us !

" ' Gentlemen of th' Bedlam Guards,' says
th' maijor, ' about three kilometres down
that 'ere road your division is awaitin' you.
Down there a-cryin' for your presence is the
roast beef of old Maconochie, an' the coffin
nails of Madame Woodbine, an' the yellow
perils of M'sieur Wills.'

" At that minute a 'igh explosive 'it a
'ouse at th' corner an' levelled hit t' th'
ground.

" ' Will ye follow th' band,' says 'e, ' or
d'y'e prefer to meet beyond th' river ? '

" ' We'll foller ye t' 'ell ! ' I shouted, an'
th' band struck up 'Th' British Grenadiers'
again an' marched orf. We slung our kits
on and followed.

" ' Oo knows " Tickle Mary " ? ' shouts the
maijsor.

" We all did.

" ' Righto,' says 'e, an' th' second shriek
of th' tin whistle chimed in t' the chune of
' Tipperary' :

That's the wrong way to tickle Mary,
That's the wrong way to kiss :
Don't you know that over here, lad,
They like it better like this.
Hooray pour la France !
Farewell Angleterre ;
We'll know how to tickle Mary
Après la guerre !

"There was a cheer w'en we joined th' division. It was a 'earty one, too, but nothin' t' one we 'anded th' maijor ! Gawd lumme, I'd like t' meet 'im some day w'en he's in civvies—I'd give 'im a shake all right, all right ! 'E was a good ol' sport, 'e was that ! "

And that was the funniest incident observed during the war by Private Evans of the 7th Queen's.

VI Three Irish Soldiers and a Maid of Amiens

"It's a mighty good world, so it is, dear lass,
When even the worst is said.
There's a smile and a tear, a sigh and a cheer,
And better be living than dead ;
A joy and a pain, a loss and a gain ;
There's honey and maybe some gall :
Yet still I declare, foul weather or fair,
It's a mighty good world after all."

R. W. Service.

I

I WAS on my way from Ham to Villers-Faucon one day in a war-worn Ford car. A few kilometres beyond Peronne we had a breakdown. Hopeless of immediate recovery, I jumped a lorry and was carried as far as Tincourt. On the roadside sat two soldiers on a box of ammunition.

"Egad!" said one of them in a stage whisper not intended for my ears ; "he luks loike a haythen from your ind o' creation, Fergus, but——" The same voice asked the

time of day and offered a few remarks on the weather and then plunged into the topic uppermost in both minds—the shortage of cigarettes—compared to which, in the mind of a soldier, shortage of ammunition is quite a negligible consideration. I had a *communiqué* on the subject. They were on the way, but, just to relieve the situation in a few isolated instances, I had brought some along. That, in brief was my introduction to Moriarty of the Munsters and his pal Ferguson from Sandy Row. They had struck up a casual acquaintance in an *estaminet* in Amiens some months previously, and a series of accidents threw them together quite frequently as their units moved forward in the great advance.

Moriarty had been with the Munsters from the Mons show. He was unscathed. Ferguson came out with the Riflemen from the north and had been badly mauled. He was attached to a Labour Corps and considered himself “crocked.”

“Isn’t it quare,” said Ferguson meditatively, “what fools men are t’ be knockin’

th' life out ov each other fur nixt t'
nothin' ? ”

“ It is,” said Moriarty, taking the cigarette
out of his mouth, “ but, egad, I suppose
it's Hobson's Choice, ayther t' kill or be kilt,
an' who knows which has th' right t' be
wrong ? ”

“ Maan alive,” said Ferguson, “ iv'ry time
I think ov it m' mind gets all throughother.”

“ An' don't we be doin' that same at home
widout sinse or raisin' ? ” asked the Munster
man.

“ Is it th' priests, or th' parsons, or th'
politicians ? ” asked Ferguson.

“ It isn't ! ” said Moriarty. “ It's just th'
nature ov th' baste, an' that kin only be
changed in Purgatory ! ”

“ Aye, oh aye,” said Ferguson dryly, and
with a smile; “ but ye see, Moriarty, my
thrain dizn't stop at that station ! ”

“ Eyah, it's meself that's sorry fur ye,
Fergus, me bhoy, fur if ye don't stop there ye
go on shtraight through to ——.” A lorry
came lumbering along. Moriarty stepped out
in front of it. “ Excuse me, sor,” he yelled,

"but is this th' Dublin express for Villers-Faucon ? "

" Hexpress 'ell ! " shouted the driver ; " get hout o' th' wai ! "

" Here ye are, Fergus, me bhoy," said Moriarty, " jump aboard; this is yer thrain, an' good luck t' yez ! "

" Where ye goin' ? " asked the driver angrily. " Hurry up ; don't stand there blockin' th' traffic ! "

" Don't luk at me in that tone ov voice, young fellah," said Moriarty in mock solemnity, " fur it's meself that doesn't cyare wan tinker's —— where I go in this God —— blest counthry, but——"

" Jump hin—get a move hon ! "

The three of us climbed in behind and the lorry went on its way.

" Where d'ye b'long ? G.H.Q. or just a common M.P., eh ? " said the driver.

" Yer a purty good guesser t' know so little, me bhoy," replied Moriarty. " It's an 'M.K.' I am, for I riprisinted th' Munsters in Klink last month fur th' unnatural crime ov not bein' in two places at wan toime ! "

“ ‘Ow’s that ? ”

“ Aisy, me bhoy, purty aisy ! I wuz in Amiens whin th’ sargent called me name out in Villers-Faucon ! ”

I was having a cup of tea with the C.O. of the Munsters later that afternoon when Jerry sent a shower of shells over from St. Emelie on the hill. It isn’t polite to break up a company for such trifles and nobody moved. I wanted to move—desperately wanted to move, because I take a boyish delight in pyrotechnic displays. A wild cheer outside startled me.

“ It’s a football game,” said the C.O. quietly. That was my excuse, however, and I begged leave to watch the sport.

The first thing I saw when I came out of the hut was what looked like a huge city on fire—a gorgeous and awful spectacle that fascinated and held me spellbound. It was a sunset. In a fold of the rolling ground the Munsters, with the abandon of youth and the vigour of vikings, were booting the ball to and fro a few thousand yards from the German

lines, as if they were in Phoenix Park on St. Patrick's Day!

Moriarty was there. His shirt was in ribbons and the remainder of his scant habiliments were suspended by a precarious and temporary arrangement of strings. His black hair lay in a matted mass on his bronzed brow. Shells from British batteries were hurtling over their heads and Jerry's compliments were dropping around—only occasionally interfering with the game. These men go over the top into a life and death struggle with the enemy with lighted cigarettes in their mouths. At football they never smoke—it's too serious.

I was turning this paradox over in my mind when Moriarty noticed me. Without a moment's hesitation he left the scrimmage and sped toward me like a deerhound.

"Yer off?"

"Yes, in a few minutes."

"Here, Murphy, take me place fur a minute!"

In less than a minute he returned with a letter which he asked me to deliver personally.

I promised to deliver it and shortly afterwards left for Tincourt.

A few days later I was in Amiens and delivered the letter. It was addressed :

Miss Marcelle Millerand,
Vegetable Stall,
Place St. Michel,
Amiens.

Amiens was deserted. It had not been destroyed, but it was badly battered. The population had been ordered out by Government. A few people had evaded the order by hiding. There were two *estaminets*, a newspaper shop and a tobacconist still running. The streets were almost entirely deserted. A British soldier stood in the very centre of the city to direct the traffic, but there was little traffic to direct. Grass grew on the main side-walks and a cow could find grazing on the Rue des Augustines, even the wide gravel yard of the Palais de Justice was beginning to look like a lawn. Gone were the rich and the poor—even the beggars at

the cathedral doors had gone, for seven shells had ploughed their way into the “Bible of Amiens,” and the floor was littered with debris. “Amiens Ville Morte,” was how the French described it.

I found the vegetable stall. It was on the Square—opposite the statue of Peter the Hermit, about thirty-five yards from the south-east corner of the cathedral. An old woman was in charge when I arrived. I knew Moriarty wasn’t sending a missive by special messenger to an old woman, so I inquired.

“Oh, yes, Marcelle would be there in the afternoon,” I was informed coldly by the old woman. She spoke as if I was one of a long procession—perhaps I was, but I didn’t detain her long. I went into the cathedral to await the arrival of Mademoiselle. She came in the early afternoon and relieved the old woman.

When from the cathedral door I observed she was alone behind the leeks and cabbages, I went over and presented the letter. Moriarty hadn’t asked me to stand and stare at

her, or to hold a conversation or introduce myself or any of a dozen things I found myself full of desire to do—and some of which I did.

She was a rather tall, slender girl with an olive complexion, jet black hair, dreamy, dark brown eyes with heavy eyebrows. The lines of the nose and mouth were regular and proportioned to the finely chiselled, oval face. In animation the nostrils distended to a noticeable degree. In repose, it was the face of a monk. When she laughed her face was diffused with a strangely beautiful spiritual light. She was dressed in black—a black skirt with black *décoletté* blouse with a little shawl hanging loosely around her shoulders.

She tore open the letter and read it. I watched her face. I was not asked to wait for an answer—I waited, however. So did two customers. Emotions positive, and negative, chased each other over her eyes and mouth. I expected to see the little god *amant* jump out from behind the cabbages any moment.

“*Tout va bien, m’sieur!*” she said as she put the letter in her money box and attended to her customers.

I saw her again. I had several long looks from the cathedral door, and once I shamelessly went up and bought cabbages. I felt sure that Moriarty would approve my good taste and be lenient with my curiosity.

II

I was with the Northumbrian Division at Doulers, after the Armistice. The men were billeted in half a dozen mud holes called villages, and their only occupation was fine combing French fields for scrap iron and other war junk. They were smitten with a surfeit that seemed to enter the very marrow of their bones. There were no shops, no *estaminets*, few people, and not even a newspaper could be bought on the streets. The days were short and rainy. The nights were long and candleless. I had not heard from my friend Moriarty. I did not know whether he was dead or alive. I was told that a battalion of Munsters was serving under

Rollo in the 150th Brigade at Noyelles, and there I found him.

Of course, my first question concerned Marcelle. A sickly sort of smile overspread his broad, Celtic features as said he : "It's a long sthory."

I met him by appointment a few days later and we set out along the main road toward the *Forêt de Mormal*—only a couple of thousand yards from the Brigade H.Q.

"Ye remimber me tallin' ye ov Flanagan ?" was the opening.

"Your chum in the Connaughts ?"

"Th' same !"

"Yes, I remember."

"It wuz himself that wuz th' darin'est divil ov the Rangers, but a bad egg in affairs ov th' heart. I inthrajooced 'im t' Marcelle an' he begins t' run 'er down. 'What fur do ye be talkin' ov marryin' a foreigner ?' says he. 'Shure it's only throuble ye're coortin' an' not a colleen !' 'Dennis, me bhoy,' I says, 'there's no fly specks on yer soderin', but whin wisdom wuz bein' handed around ye wor in th' pigsty or behind th' dour !

I'm goin' t' marry 'er an' marry 'er in that cathedral, jist as shure as guns iron or Pether keeps th' kays ! ' Thim wor th' wurdz. Eyah, it's wondtherful how double faced some omaudhans kin be on th' woman question. Th' devil paveed around that vegetable shtall whin I wuzn't there. He got a book an' shtruggled wid th' Frinch, too. He wint in fur shstripes an' in a month ur two wuz full sargent. Egad, he lorded it over private Moriarty whin we met an' don't ye forgit it. Wan day Fergus—ye know Fergus ? Well, wud ye believe it, sir, Fergus says t' me, ' Haave y' seen Flanagan ? ' he says. ' Not lately,' I says ; ' what's up wid him ? ' ' Faith,' says, he, ' he's a lootinant ! ' ' It's takin' a rise out o' me ye are ! ' says I. ' Maan alive,' says he, ' I seen him wid me own eyes, an' it's like a paycock he's lukin' ! '

" It was Mc'Gurk ov th' Rangers that towld me th' shtory. Flanagan rush't a nest of machine guns an' tuk prisoner what he didn't kill, an' th' playbabin' awoke nixt morning' t' foind himself famous. It must a been a h—— ov a job t' batther intelligence

inta his conshrticded noodle, but he got th' pip on his sholdther shtraps, an' there he wuz, a full flidged platoon commander !

" It wuz th' nature ov Flanagan that iv'ry toime he opened his mouth, he stuck his fut in it. ' Mister Flanagin,' says th' Curnil wan day, ' this front rank,' says he, ' is th' dhirtiest bunch ov min I've iver set me eyes on ! '

" ' Aye, sor,' sayd Flanagan, ' that's thtrue fur you—but ye haven' seen th' rear rank yit ! '

" ' Captain,' says th' Curnil, ' see that this young gintleman is inshtructed in th' responsibilities ov his jooties ! ' An' only a week afther his Captain says, ' Misther Flanagan,' says he, ' whin did yer min have a change ov clane shirts ? '

" ' This mornin', sor ! ' says he.

" ' Rubbish an' tinnis balls,' says th' Captain, ' no washin' has arrived here fur weeks ! '

" ' It's th' gospel thruth ye spake, sor,' says Flanagan, ' but th' front rank changed wid th' rear rank ! '

"I'm tellin' ye this t' give ye a line on th' mintality av th' galoot, but th' worst is comin'!"

We sat on a log on the edge of the forest. He threw away the fag-end of a Woodbine and proceeded to fill his pipe. A magpie flew out of the woods and landed on the clearing in front of us.

"Bad cess t' yer black an' white sowl!" said Moriarty. "I believe it was a brother ov yours that wuz me undoin' at Amiens!" He crossed himself and lit his pipe.

"Marcelle said she'd marry me if I learnt th' Frinch! Egad, I sweat blood over th' infernal lingo! Howiniver, I wurk't overtime at it. I bought th' ring an' she tuk it. She wuz lary on th' date. Whin I'd wheedle an' pavee an' coax she'd sai '*quelquefois*' an' '*bientot*' an' things like that. Oh, saint ov God. I'd turn over th' laves an' find th' wurd for 'now' an' divil take me if I could git m' thick tongue around it. She'd laugh an' I'd pretind t' be lukin' fur somethin' else. But I knew she'd marry me! Begobs,

I wuz shure ov that be th' way she'd let me use
me hands !

“ ‘ Captain,’ says I wan day on parade,
‘ it’s gettin’ married I’d loike t’ be an’ I want
a week’s leave ! ’

“ ‘ Where’er ye goin’,’ says he.

“ ‘ Amiens ! ’ says I.

“ ‘ T’ marry a Frinch woman ? ’

“ ‘ Y’ve hit it th’ furst toime ! ’

“ ‘ Kin ye spake Frinch ? ’

“ ‘ It’s meself that kin do that same ! ’

“ ‘ Shpake it ! ’ says he.

“ ‘ Captain agra,’ says I, soft like, ‘ th’
Frich I shpake is t’ make love wid—an’ not
fur military inspection ! ’

“ Wud ye belave it, sor, th’ ould lorry I
jump’t t’ Amiens wuz t’ me a golden chariot
dhriven be angels ! Me heart wuz as full ov
sunshine as an egg’s full ov mate—egad, it
wuz that ! Th’ dhriver luk’t at me out o’
th’ tail ov his eye as if I wuz gone clane
looney—maybe I wuz, too. I wuz hummin’
over an’ over : ‘ *Jamie voo, Jamie voo, Jamie
voo !* ’ That’s th’ Frinch fur ‘ I love you,’
you know, sor.

"Phwat a —— fool I wuz not t' know
that iv'ry man in th' regiment wud loike
t' marry Marcelle! Dozens ov them—scores
ov them bought carrots an' leeks an' cabbages,
jist fur th' joy ov lukin' at 'er, up close!
An' be th' seven crosses ov Arbow, th'
minute ye'd luk at 'er ye'd forgit there wuz
a war on!"

His pipe had gone out. To knock the ashes out on the log and fumble in his pocket for the tobacco camouflaged the emotion. Resuming, he laughed loudly at what he probably considered a weakness. "T' make a long shtory short, sor, Flanagan had played th' devil! Th' heart ov Marcelle was cut in two an' Flanagan had th' biggest half! She was all up in th' air an' wudn't say yis nor no. Whin I axed 'er if she'd shure marry me she'd just say '*pew-tet*' an' laugh.

"Wan day I sent an A.S.C. man around t' buy up all th' vegetables she had. Thin I appears on th' scene an' off we wint fur th' afternoon.

"It wuz thin I saw that I wuz up agin th' fight ov me life. She cudn't go wid m' nixt

day fur th' raison, if ye plaze, that Lootinint Flanagan wuz favourin' Amiens wid his prisince ! Sufferin' cats ! I wuz boilin' over. I didn't know phwat t' do an' had sivin days t' do it !'

"On Flanagan's day on, I ditirmed t' git a luk at thim—unbeknownst. It wuz loike pourin' pethrol on a foire t' put it out ! On my day on I wurked th' Frinch lingo an' '*jamie vood*', an' '*vothre amant'ed*' till I thought she'd split in two wid th' laughter. I cud do aanythin' wid 'er—aanythin', excipt th' wan thing I wanted t' do—marry 'er !

"On the last night ov m' lave, ther wuz an air raid on. Oh, glory t' God fur that same ! If ould Jerry had known th' joy he'd given be comin', he'd have croaked wid sheer invy. We had a whole pillar an' half a candle all to our own, and whoile th' bombs wuz rippin' th' rafthers off th' roofs an' th' houses we wuz as happy an' comfortable—yis, comfortable, mind ye—as larks in a nest ! Eyah, Mother ov Mercy, I think I'm there now ! Nixt mornin' I au revoir'd, played th' baiser tatoo on 'er tinderist ov lips an' wid

m' heart in m' boots wint back t' th' Munsther ! ”

“ And you left Flanagan in possession of the field ? ”

“ For th' mather ov physical prisince I had th' betther ov him be two days, but in inflooince I'd a snakin' suspicion he had me bate be a month ! ”

“ But wasn't it a fair competition between two men for the heart of a girl ? ”

“ It wuzn't ! If yer name wuz Flanagan an' I towld ye I wuz goin' t' marry th' purtiest girl in France an' I inthrajooced ye an' ye stole 'er frum me, cud ye blame me if I considthered ye th' dhirtiest shcaundrel that iver throd th' earth ? ”

“ I couldn't ! ” I said, and Moriarty lit his pipe for the sixth or seventh time and proceeded.

“ Wan day fate or th' devil threw us t'gither. Fergus an' me wuz in a pub whin in comes me bould Flanagan. It's now or niver, thinks I, an' before he cud move or sphake I wuz lukin' him in th' eyes. ‘ Misther Flanagan,’ I sez, ‘ I'd loike t' be afther havin’

a wurrd wid ye.' There wuz other min there, so I tuk him inta th' back—moshinin' Fergus t' follow.

"' It's a matter ov honour,' sez I whin we reached th' garden, ' an' bein' an officer an' a timporry gintleman, ye'll not be afther refusin' t' settle it wan way or th' other.'

"' I'll have no continshun wid you, Private Moriarty,' sez he.

" Egad, sor, th' wurrd 'private' from Flanagan went through me loike th' wound ov a high explosive.

"' On this spot, Flanagan,' sez I, ' yer jist Flanagan an' I'm Moriarty—yer a Connaught man—aren't ye ? '

"' I am ! ' sez he.

"' An' I'm a Munster man, an' Fergus frum Ulster shtands here as judge ! Now thin,' sez I, ' I'll fight ye fur th' whole heart ov Marcelle ! Th' wan that's bate will write a dyin' letther ; Fergus'll take it an' tell Marcelle he's done in an' th' winner—well, it's Misthress Flanagan or Misthress Moriarty, toot sweet ! '

"' Fur an officer——' sez he.

" ' Fur——' sez I, ' ye dhirty black-hearted coward—ye delapidated hearse-driver, ye——' He made a dhrive at me.

" ' Hould on there,' sez Fergus, ' do th' thing dacently an' in ordther.' Off wint th' duds an' bing bang wint th' battherin' rams.

" It wuz th' toughest foight ov me life, sor, egad it wuz, an' there wur times whin th' chances wor ten t' wan it 'ud be Misthress Flanagan—but it wuzn't—a lucky punch t' th' place where Flanagan kipt his wind an' he wint down wid a thud ! "

" So he wrote the letter," I interposed.

" He did, an' he writ it in th' Frinch. I tuk it out of Fergus' hand an' pretended t' rade it. ' Flanagan,' sez I, ' ye'll plaze put that in Irish—that's th' langwidge we decided in ! ' He did that, too—an' whin he handed it over, I sez : ' Luk ye here, Flanagan me bhoy. I'm a haard man, but I'm no brute baste. It galls me t' think that Marcelle cud luve ye—but that's her funeral—not mine. Flanagan me bhoy, ye kin have 'er. I'll write th' dyin' letther, an' Fergus'll tell 'er I'm dead ! ' "

"And did Ferguson take the letter?"

"He did that, sor." And Moriarty arose from the log and laughed like a boy.

"Egad, but isn't it th' funniest ov all wurrlds?" he said, as he sat down again.

"Fergus tuk th' letther, but the black-hearted haythen towld 'er we wor both dead! She belaved 'im an' he married 'er himself an' tuk 'er t' Sandy Row."

" But you know there's peoples goin' that good
They haven't a smell for the steam of the blood
That's in a man ; or, if they have,
They houlds their noses, and makes belave
They haven't. But the Pazor—no !
True and kind ; and the ebb and the flow
Of all men's hearts went through and through him."

J. E. Brown.

I

THE — th Labour Battalion was the pickaxe and shovel contingent that stopped a German rush at a critical period of the war. They were stationed for a time at Dombre. The C.O. was an elderly man who had seen much service in his younger days. He was a human sort of man and had a lot of sentiment in him, but was naturally afraid that anyone should ever discern it. He took a keen interest in the Y.M.C.A., and in a half apologetic sort of way explained that he was interested solely because the

service of the Red Triangle camp followers had a military value. He used to lend a hand in the free and easy hut meetings—more, I imagine, to encourage the officers to do likewise than for the sake of any good he thought he could do for the men. He was asked to preside at a famous evangelist's meeting one night, and as an introduction he gave a short talk on race-horses. It was a pet theme of his, and somehow or other he connected it with the purpose of the meeting.

"Oh, yes," he said to me one night at dinner, "there's something in religion, but few of these professional religionists seem to have any gift in bringing it out."

One day a new Padre arrived and was given a seat at the C.O.'s table. He was a tall, monk-like person, sombre, severe and reticent. "Reading for Holy Orders" had not got him very far in the humanities—whatever else it had done for him. He took himself very seriously, and in the army there is hope for that peculiar bent of mind. If he doesn't get over it in the army, the

case is hopeless. He wasn't much of a preacher. The function of the priest was more to his taste. His Churchmanship was of the variety called High.

"Some show," was the curt description of his Sunday services. He blossomed in regalia and shone to best advantage in the midst of candles, vestments and other appurtenances of his special cult. He was punctilious in matters that didn't matter much to the ordinary human and had scant use for those outside the pale. He used all the frills that the law allowed and a few it didn't. When he spoke of Dissenters you could hear the ring of the capital D. He was the soul of courtesy withal, and was a perfect gentleman in his way. His way was narrow, and he usually walked alone.

The C.O. took his measure and determined to give him a wide berth. He believed in hell. His hell was real to him, and one of the major motives of his life was to make it real to others. It was the brimstone variety, and no matter what the subject of

his sermon might be, he usually managed to drag the doctrine into it by the ears.

At first he was called "Brimstone" by the Tommies, but they changed that later to "The Dud Padre," and that in turn dwindled down to just "Dud." He never seemed to get angry, but neither did he laugh. He had no sense of humour—at least, if he had, it was suppressed.

"This sky pilot we've got now," said the C.O. to the Y.M., "is a wash-out. I want you to get up a rival show to his on Sunday evenings, and I will give you all the help I can."

The Dud Padre carried on with his own show at the same hour, but he hardly mustered a corporal's guard. The Y.M. show was of the cheerful, popular kind and drew a big crowd. But this passive resistance to the methods of the doctrinaire hardly satisfied the C.O. One day he tackled him on his favourite doctrine.

"You seem solidly frozen to this doctrine of hell, Padre. Now, don't you honestly think that somehow or other lots of men

will bungle into heaven, just as we somehow bungle into military success ? ”

“ I am afraid so, sir,” was his prompt reply.

“ But it would hurt your feelings, eh ? ”

“ There is but one way, sir.”

“ And that’s your way ? ”

“ No, sir, not mine, but——”

“ Now look here, young man,” the Major interrupted, “ I don’t want to talk to you as C.O. of this battalion, but just as a plain man of the street. I’ve been up against life in a variety of ways, and I’ve had some ideas battered into me in a rather rough kind of way. You are a young man, and you’ve just emerged from some theological hot-house where they cultivate the orchid variety of human. In an ordinary course of events I would not bother ; you could go your pace and I would go mine, but this is not an ordinary course. It’s an extraordinary affair, and I’ve got these men here. They are under fire night and day, and it’s up to men of mental capacity to make their lot as bearable as possible. It’s not only

a duty, but it's a privilege as well. I'm just a plain soldier—really an old dug-out, and I can't do much, but between us, if we put our heads together and put some heart into it, we can give them cheer. Don't you think so ? ”

“ Yes, sir, of course, but the office of a priest is not to give cheer, but——”

“ Tosh, man ! No butts here but rifle-butts and the machinery of death. Let's give men good cheer, that and patience, fortitude, courage and sacrifice—arent' these things of the essence of religion ? If not, we'd better get another religion and damned quick ! ”

“ Really, sir, excuse me, but I'm astonished and——”

“ And you've got more astonishment ahead of you. What you really need, Browne, is a good dose of trench life. When you lean up against a barrage a dozen times and get your wings singed and clipped, you'll have a new version of your favourite theme.”

The Padre was silent. The C.O. took a

cigarette out of his case and pushed the case out to the man in front of him.

"No, thank you, sir, I don't smoke."

"Excuse me, I forgot."

The Padre arose. As he did so, the C.O. said:

"I have wanted to say that to you since I took your measure, Browne, and now that it's off my chest I shall be more frank with you—but just keep in mind that there's nothing of red tape or officialism in what I've said. It's a man-to-man affair."

"Thank you, sir."

II

It was the Padre himself who told a friend of the conversation, and the friend told it to somebody else. In a few days the battalion knew all about it. He became the object of humorous innuendo, mingled with some ridicule. That didn't please him. He was logical in pursuing a course mapped out by his own conscience. Men came to his voluntary shows out of pure curiosity. They laughed a good deal, and not infrequently he was heckled.

One Sunday morning at the usual church parade a simple incident revealed the force of this growing unpopularity. It was a larger parade than usual. The mule drivers from a dozen lorry parks were present; so was the C.O. and every officer in the battalion. When sermon time came the Padre preached from that passage where Jesus sent two men to bring an ass. When he had waxed eloquent on the incident, he pointed dramatically to the mule drivers, and said: "If a man came and asked you for your mule, without credentials, would you hand him over?" One Tommy had been kicked by his mule that morning, and quick as a flash he answered: "Yus, guv'nor; 'e could 'ave mine an' th' bloody 'arness with 'im!"

The quick retort disorganised for the time the religious service. Wild roars of laughter rent the air—quieted down and rose again with renewed boisterousness. The Padre smiled. It was the first smile the battalion had seen on his face, and they gave vent to their appreciation of it. Laughter and applause in church brushed the smile from

his face. He was evidently embarrassed and lost a few links of connection in his discourse.

" You was just about to collar th' hass, sir," said a mule driver, and again the congregation howled in merriment. The Padre looked angry. The C.O. did not interfere. He could not conceal his enjoyment of the situation. The whole thing was extraordinary and unheard of, but so was this type of padre, and the C.O. sat mute and left the field to the resources of the man who seemed afflicted with mental myopia.

" We will take up the collection now," said the Padre. The men looked at each other and smiled. Usually there were no collections at church parade. Perhaps he forgot.

" Blime ! " said one man just loud enough to be heard. "'E's gettin' back on us. 'E'll be callin' fur kit inspection if we don't git hout."

The collection was taken, the Benediction pronounced, and the Adjutant marched the men out.

III

Few men escape a mental change—often complete transformation after the baptism

of fire. Boys became men in the course of an hour. It doesn't matter how much the ceremony is performed—it is looking death in the face that counts. The Dud Padre had heard the guns and had sought the safest *abri* in an air attack, but his baptism of fire had not yet arrived.

One late afternoon, in the twilight, the C.O. and the Adjutant were on their way from Dombre to Elverdinghe. As they passed the ruins of the old church at the corner they saw the Padre sitting on a pile of broken brick, where the altar of the church used to be.

"What do you make of him?" asked the C.O.

"He's a good man, no doubt," said the Adjutant.

"But not good for much," replied the C.O.

"He'll improve, sir."

"I wish he'd do it quickly," said the Major. "Sitting there in the ruins, he presents a good picture of his mind: mentally he sits amid the ruins of the long-buried past, wearing the second-hand intellectual garments of his ancestors."

"There are quite a number of us, sir, who are not even so well clothed as that."

"True; true enough," said the C.O.; "but a little common sense mixed with humour and good cheer would make him a useful man."

"I think there's good stuff in him, sir, but this eternal harping on hell gets on my nerves."

"If I wasn't religiously inclined," said the C.O., "I should say it was a hell of a religion!"

That night the roads were blocked with traffic. A big movement was in preparation, and Jerry appeared to be suspicious. His planes took long chances and came over every hour of the afternoon, taking photographs. At seven the guns became active, more active than usual. Bursts of flame lit up the dark heavens for miles around. Goths hummed overhead on their way to the coast. There was an indefinable feeling that something on a large scale was about to happen.

It was the night of the Padre's Bible class.

He held it in the Y.M. hut on the edge of the Dombre Lorry Park. Next to his priestly function the Bible class was his most valued work. Not many attended, but he didn't mind that. If his teaching seemed somewhat out of joint with the times, his life was blameless and unceasingly active. No one doubted his sincerity, no one ever sought his help in vain. Whatever he could do with a good conscience he did, and did it with his might—and although his outlook was as narrow as a hen's face, he stood head and shoulders above the man who becomes slangy and vulgar under the illusion that the rank and file like that sort of thing.

He had been expounding the 91st Psalm for about fifteen minutes, when the Archies began to bark. Lights were extinguished, but the Dud Padre went on with his exposition. Above the sound of his voice the um—um—um of the Gothas could be heard. He had just passed the sixth verse when the sergeant-major entered and ordered all men in the hut to get down flat on the floor. Down they went—the Padre with them.

They had scarcely time to spread themselves on the floor when Jerry dropped his first instalment. It shook the earth and the hut trembled.

"I might as well go on with the lesson, boys," he said. As he spoke a bomb dropped outside and mud and debris crashed through the windows. Some of the mud got into the Padre's mouth and stopped his speech. The men were bespattered also, and some of them hit with flying brick and bits of wood.

The Padre spat the mud out of his mouth and proceeded :

"As I was saying——"

"Oh, shut up, for Gawd's sake," said a member of the class.

"Is your 'ell as nice as Jerry's?" asked another.

"I am not certain, but——"

"O' course you ain't——"

"But I think it's the eleventh verse where the Father assures us that He shall give His angels charge over us."

"'E's given the bloomin' Boche charge

hover us hat this minute," said the man who first interrupted.

Bombs were dropping in quick succession now. One smashed all the windows, another blew away the back end of the hut. These crashes were followed by a silence which was broken only by the Archies and the engines of the Gothas. No man knew whether anyone in the hut had been killed or not.

"Toward the very end of the Psalm," continued the Padre calmly, "the Father urges us to call upon Him. He promises to answer us if we do——"

"Call then, you blighter, call!" said a man whose face was at that moment in the mud.

"That's a wise suggestion," said the Padre, and he called, and the call was clear, reverent and calm. It was a call for those around him, not for himself.

When the "all clear" sounded the men arose. A candle was lit and stuck on a table. The Dud Padre was covered with mud from head to foot. His hair was dishevelled and his face was black. In his right hand he

held firmly the Bible, but it looked like a handful of waste paper. Gone beyond recovery was the 91st Psalm, and a faint suggestion of a smile lit up his keen eyes as he tried to verify by the book his guesses at the location of the verses.

The C.O. entered, but the Padre took no particular notice.

"Indeed, upon my word, you know," he said, "I think this air raid was partly meant to illustrate, as no words of mine could, the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture."

The men were less inclined to be humorous. They looked at him—as the C.O. looked—rather nonplussed, but sure of one thing: that the least ruffled man in the camp was the man whom they catalogued as a washout.

"If you have finished," the C.O. said, "I would like you to lend a hand over here where our men have suffered most. I came in here to find out how many of you were alive."

IV

Six months later the battalion was in the Ypres salient. Some of them were building

the Haig Line, others were carrying over the interminable duck boards to the front line, rations—iron rations for Jerry. Some were digging trenches, and others were salvaging the district around Kitchener's Wood. I was with General Frank's men of the 35th Division up there, and met the C.O.

"How's your Padre, Major?" I asked.

"Oh, I lost the man you knew."

"The Dud Padre?"

"Yes," he said. "We lost him one night in an air raid, but we found a better one."

"How?"

"Well," he said, with a smile, "*the Dud Padre found himself.*"

The story of the awakening was a long one and somewhat puzzling. The officers good-naturedly ragged him about the change, but he never confessed that any change had taken place. He seemed to develop rapidly a sense of humour. He was heard to laugh. He no longer felt it incumbent to lecture men on hell. A strangely beautiful tenderness characterised his discourses. They concerned themselves with God as a father and all the

sons of men as His children. The men changed their attitude towards him, and while they still called him "Dud," they considered him the bravest man in the battalion.

"He not only illustrates his new outlook in his own personality," said the Major, "but his sermons are of the highest military value. Our men, as you can see, are now constantly under fire, and wherever there is danger, the Padre is there. He is a constant source of inspiration to us all. Indeed, I am beginning to get a little anxious about his soul's salvation, for I caught him in the act the other day, puffing away like blazes at a cigarette given him by Dick Dawson, the mule-driver who interrupted his sermon that morning at Dombre."

"That's serious," I said.

"Yes, very serious, but it's the only serious danger about him now."

Months after the guns had ceased, when the map of the New World was being made in Paris, I met a young subaltern of the battalion who gave me the news—sad news

to me. The battalion had lost heavily during the last period of the war. The C.O. and the Dud Padre had both "gone West" and were sleeping side by side in Century Wood cemetery.

The Padre went first, and the C.O. gave orders that, in the event of his death, if possible, he was to be laid beside his friend.

"The last thing the C.O. did," said the young officer, "was to have a small head-stone put up over the Padre's grave with these words on it :

' Love took up the harp of life
And smote on all its chords with might,
Smote the chord of self
That, trembling, passed in music, out of sight.'

VIII The Rise and Fall of the British Republic

I

THERE were seven of them—men of Middlesex—and they were all that were left of a Middlesex regiment. They were lost, disconnected, detached. They didn't know where they were: the ground was new to them, and the little *hameau* where they bivouacked for the night had lost its name. For years successive waves of fire had swept over it and reduced it to a rubbish-heap.

How far the British were in front of them, or how far the Germans were behind them they did not know. There had been a retirement, but from what they had seen of it it looked like a county fair when the races were over and everybody makes for home.

Each man had in his dixie rations for the day. That, at least, was the theory, and in military matters theory counts for much.

They unpacked their trappings, stacked their rifles and sat down on the door-step of a ruined house, and, once seated, the Field-Marshal himself could not have got them up again. He would have found the spirit willing enough, but the flesh was spent and devitalised to absolute exhaustion.

When Tommy hasn't energy enough to fumble in his pocket for his cigarette he has reached the limit of endurance. They were muddy, dishevelled and worn, hungry, thirsty and sleepy. They had been fighting for ten hours at a stretch without respite. Their officers and comrades were either dead, or wounded, or missing. Four of them stretched themselves on their backs and went promptly to sleep.

Of the three who were awake, Chivers, the youngest of them, struggled to his feet.

"'Ere, ol' son," he said to the other two, "look hout for these 'ere sleepin' beauties an' lemme go 'untin' for 'idden treasures."

"Where ye goin'?" they asked.

"Gawd knows—anywheres!"

Chivers was as cautious as he was

humorous : he went reconnoitring for a dug-out. He went around the ruined buildings with his hands in his pockets in an aimless sort of a way, but with a keen eye for anything that looked like a cellar.

Half an hour later he returned to the group, and there was an elasticity in his step and a look in his eyes that roused Barton's interest—Barton being the only one awake.

"Ever read 'Treasure Island'?" he asked Barton.

"No—where is it?"

"Right 'ere," said Chivers, pointing along the main road toward the end of the village.

"What er ye gettin' at?"

"I dropped into a cellar down there ; come along an' 'ave the one an' only surprise of yer miserable hexistence—come on!"

He took Barton by the arm and helped him up.

"No bloomin' sky-larkin'," said Barton, when on his feet. "I'm too —— tired to be 'aul'd abowt, I am."

They left the other five sound asleep in the

cold open air and proceeded to "Treasure Island," which was a roughly-built stone cellar beneath what must have been the most substantial house in the village.

"'Ow in —— did this 'ere hescape th' heagle heye ov ol' friend Jerry?" Barton inquired as he looked around the cellar.

"W'at's of more himportance, Private Theophilus Barton," said Chivers, as he pressed his shoulders back and whacked his chest with his clenched fist, "is 'ow I, John Baptist Chivers, of th' Royal Middlesex, hobserved hit—eh, what?"

The fall of the gable had covered the cellar door. Two strong beams lay across it and the door had gradually rotted. Chivers saw the door and cleared away the wreckage.

"W'at's hin it?" Chivers kicked a barrel, gasping with astonishment when he found it solid.

"Wine, Theophilus—red wine, of Burgundy, or Wipers, or—— an' look 'ere, ol' son——" He pointed to the ceiling, from which hung dried onions, "an' look 'ere"—pointing to a corner in which was dried wood

in short lengths. In another corner near the door there was a pile of potatoes with white stalks a foot long. Chivers became boisterously enthusiastic. He caught Barton by the shoulders and slapped him vigorously as he danced around him in glee.

"'Ow can we hopen th' —— thing ? " asked Barton, pointing to the barrel.

"Easy, Theophilus, easy, lad ! "

"Hit mai be, y'know, a bloomin' booby trap."

"Wal, cheerful hidiot, keep your maulers hoff till a hengineer hinspects it. Arf a mo till I get m' —— microscope and trench tools ! "

"Chivers, ol' son, it's a short life and a merry one until Jerry finds us—let's hout wi' th' bung ! "

"Old yer' orses," Chivers said, "we cawn't run amuck, you know ; we can haafford to be found dead—but not drunk. We will appoint a liquor controller and go on rations."

"Let's get th' lads ! "

"No, let's clean 'ouse 'ere."

"'Oly smokes an' sufferin' Moses, look 'ere,

Chivers! I'll be — if 'ere ain't a dozen demi rouges in a box—let's 'ide 'em or we'll be arter cleanin' up th' 'ole show in one jamboree!"

They covered the box with blocks of wood and left the cellar. As they approached the others, they found them standing around a black cavalry charger—a German. He had wandered into the ruined village riderless.

"'Ere, Sheepie—(his name was Lamb)—don't stand there like a chump wile this 'ere ol' black beggar ov a 'orse is a-dyin' for a drink ov water—get busy and find th' water department of this — ville."

Sheepie went off in search of water. Hamden wondered whether he'd had any fodder. Snipes (his name was Wood) wondered how "Uhlans" (named five minutes after his appearance) could be made comfortable for the night. They took the saddle off and tied him to the stump of what was once a young tree. All their own aches and pains were forgotten in the interest created by this dumb German brute who was their prisoner.

When they had made him as comfortable

as they could, they began to open their dixies and proceed to refresh themselves. Sheepie returned and reported that he could find no trace of any water.

"Can th' ol' —— drink wine—good red wine o' Picardy, eh what ?" asked Chivers, who had pledged Barton to keep the secret until after supper.

"Gone loony, Chivers ?" asked Breadalbane, whose platoon name was Rootie.

"I'll let ye into a secret, boys," said Barton. "We've found some stuff in a bloomin' cellar which th' hangels 'as kept for hour special use—but——!"

"Nothin' doin' till we've dined," said Chivers.

The men looked incredulously at the discoverers. Dixies were dropped—all eating ceased for the moment.

"Do you blighters know th' harmy punishment for spreadin' abowt a —— rumour w'at ain't got no —— foundation ?" asked Hamden.

Barton arose to his feet instantly. Chivers thought he was going to make a break for

the cellar, and dropping his dixie, made a break himself.

"Come on!" he yelled at the top of his voice, and led the way as fast as he could run.

Only three were able to follow his example, but the others followed, and a few minutes later they were all dancing like wild Indians around the wine cask. "Rootie" led and the others joined and sang "Tipperary."

II

Alison produced a Jew's harp and, jumping on the barrel, pumped music into "Tipperary" with all the power of his lungs. Of course with an orchestra they sang it over again with gusto. At the end of the second round, Chivers, in deep lower register tones, said :

"Fellow hofficers and hothers—since by a glorious feat of harms we've tuk this 'ere bloomin' vill, an' since th' hinhabitants 'ave shown a peaceable disposition, hit is my jooty to—"

"Chainge yer faice!" interrupted Barton.

"Horder there! Horder please! Don't

himagine yer collectin' bus fares in Bermondsey, Barton ! ” Chivers answered and proceeded : “ Has I was a-saiin' before I was hinterrupted by a broken-down C3 bus driver —hit becomes hus to——”

“ T' hopen this 'ere —— barrel ! ” yelled Tompkins, whose *nom de guerre* was “ Fatty.”

The suggestion ended the ceremony, and by unanimous consent the barrel was condemned to death. The men got their trench tools and proceeded to open it. The stout oak refused to yield either to trench tools or bayonets. The bung couldn't be moved. It was suggested that the end could be smashed in with a stone. Only bricks lay around. Two of them went in search of a stone. The others sat down and lit up.

Daylight was going fast and the night was full of uncertainty. Chivers suggested that all kits and accoutrements be brought to the cellar and arrangements made to spend the night there.

“ Hey, there ! ” Chivers yelled to the searchers for stones, as he emerged, “ don't bust hit until we come back ! ”

" You go an' ——" one of them yelled back, and " Rootie " was left on guard.

It didn't take long to reassemble with the kits. Two large stones were secured, but just as the operation was about to begin Alison proposed that Uhlan be cared for before dark ; some of them demurred and asked what could be done.

His plea for the horse was strong, and his advice was followed. A search was made at once by all hands for water and fodder. Nothing came of it. It suddenly occurred to one of them that the potatoes in the cellar would come in handy for Uhlan, and " Rootie " was sent for them. The others forgot their weaknesses and stood around the prisoner wondering what they could do for him. Chivers gathered a bunch of tough dried grass and gave him a good rubbing.

" Poor ol' beggar," said Barton, " let's give 'im a ration ov water out o' our bottles ! "

" Hit's a bally risky business ! " said Alison. " W'ere's our next ration a-comin' from, eh ? "

But even as he spoke he was digging out

of his big coat pocket a small tin cup which he filled out of his water-bottle and, pouring it into his helmet, passed it around for similar donations. Some had more than others, but none gave less than the standard.

Uhlans having been made as comfortable as accommodations permitted, they returned to the cellar and proceeded to open the wine cask. One man was put on guard outside. The others rolled the barrel close to the wood pile and took turns, standing on the wood so as to get distance for the force of impact as they smashed at the end with a heavy stone. Before any impression was made they were all perspiring and tired out. Finally it caved in. Splinters were removed with bayonets and the contents revealed. To their amazement and disgust, it turned out not to be wine at all. It had been cider in some former period, but was now vinegar ! The exchange of opinion that followed the discovery was of the original nature and worded in unprintable language. It was punctuated with laughter and so disturbed

the sentry outside that he left his post to inquire into its meaning.

"Let's court-martial these blighters (Chivers and Barton) fur——"

"'Old on there!" shouted Chivers, as he dug into the wood with both hands—"Ere y're! Call orf th' C.M. and drink t' th' 'ealth ov th' prisoners!" and handed the bottles around.

"Arf a mo!" said "Rootie," "if hit's vinegar I move they be gagged, cuffed, blindfolded an' shot at dawn!"

It was good red wine, and they drank the King's health and the health of "Hell-for-leather" Latham, their platoon commander who had fought his last fight. They drank each other's health and the health of the regimental dog who was gassed, and the health of Diggers and Canucks and Yorks, and fair maids of France and Marie Lloyd and Lloyd George!

All of this took time and wine and oratory, and when the minds of these men of Middlesex turned again to things mundane, the shadows had stretched, like a dark grey curtain, across

the sky, and with the day care and weariness had gone and a feeling of relief had followed.

Wit began to manifest itself, the pent-up faculties of the mind found vent in sudden flashes of humour, satire and mock heroics. They became talkative. They all talked at once. They built a fire, but as there was no chimney the smoke rather chilled the convivial atmosphere. Becoming unbearable, the smoking logs were removed, leaving only a handful of live embers around which they closely gathered, while they smoked and absorbed the red wine and settled the affairs of a troubled universe. The discussions were warm, but not hotter than trench parliaments usually are. Barton was a born Tory, but certain liquid refreshments always had a radical effect upon him, and those best acquainted with him could tell his political temperature by the number of demi rouges outside of which he had arranged himself.

III

In settling the affairs of Asia, Africa, and America, the glow of the live embers seemed

sufficient, but when the affairs of Europe, and especially the British Isles, came up for final settlement, candles were fished out of the kits and the council chamber was illuminated for the occasion.

Hamden was the quiet man of the group. He had less initiative and was less in evidence than any other. Wine on a not over-stocked stomach loosened his tongue, and he proposed a toast—a curious toast. He arose to his feet as he said :

“A’ealth to our jobs, mates—if we get ‘em!”

“Jobs!” they yelled in chorus, as they flourished the almost empty bottles.

“W’y shudn’t we get ‘em?” said Chivers.

“That’s w’at I sai!” piped in Alison.

“Oo’ll keep ‘em from us?” asked Snipes indignantly.

“Nobody! Nobody dares!” said Chivers in mock solemnity, as he held his bottle at arm’s length. “An’ if they do, mates, if they dare, I sai, let’s show ‘em we can fight at ‘ome as well as ‘ere! By —— let’s show ‘em!”

" Shallus habolish th' 'ouse o' Lords ? "

" Let's ! An' th' 'ouse o' Commons, too !
W'at do them gas-bags do fur a livin' ? "

" Let's horganise a bloomin' republic,
mates—right 'ere ! "

" Hooray ! "

Suggestions for the organisation of the new republic came thick and fast. There was a vein of seriousness. There was a deeper vein of humour. There was banter and bluster and braggadocio. The live embers died out but the blood was warm, and the bodies relaxed and the faculty of imagination had a free rein !

" Shallus taise in th' Diggers ? "

" No ! "

" W'y ? "

" Because th' blighters don't taise to gov'ment nohow ! They're worse than th' — Irish ! "

" 'Ow abowt Hindia an' Canada an' sich like, eh ? "

" Nothink doin' ! We'll 'ave our 'ands full enough wi' old England. We'll start her a-goin' first an' let hit spread ! "

A violent discussion arose as to whether they should draft a constitution or elect a president and let him do the drafting. By a show of hands they decided on the election of a president. The voting was to be by ballot and secretly! They fumbled and dug for pencils, old envelopes, blank pages of pocket New Testaments and scraps of paper were produced, and the balloting proceeded.

"'Oo is heligible fur this — job?" Chivers asked.

"Heverybody—men an' wimen!"

"Not lance-corpriis!"

"Yes, o' course!"

"An' sergeant-majors?"

"O' course, butchers, an' bakers an' candlestick-makers—we'll 'ave a real democracy w'ree heverybody is has good as hanybody helse an' better—. W'y not?"

"Aw rot!" said Snipes. "'Ow in — can hany ol' chump be president ov th' great British Republic?"

"Easy, me boy. Just has easy as any ol' chump can be a M.P. or a general!"

Other questions were asked and answered.

It was decided that each man should vote for two candidates and the one getting the lesser number of votes would be vice-president. They scattered around the old cellar marking the ballots against the wall. Hamden was appointed teller and collected the ballots in his tin hat.

In stentorian tones he ordered the electorate to be seated while he examined the ballots and announced the result. Slowly he smoothed out the crumpled bits of dirty paper, laying them on top of each other.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I 'ave th' 'onour ov hannouncin' has follows: Fourteen votes 'ave been cast. Thirteen on 'em is fur the King——"

"Hoor——"

"Shut hup idiots! An' one on 'em is fur the Prince ov Wales!"

"Hooray! Hooray!!"

"Gentlemen, we drinks th' 'ealth ov th' President an' Vice-President ov th' British Republic!"

"Hooray! Hooray!! Hooray!!!"

When the cheers died away they settled

down to the business of organisation. Things moved rapidly along. "Snipes" and "Rootie" were appointed a committee to carry the news to Buckingham Palace at once.

"Now fur th' rehorganisation ov th' harmy!" said Alison, who had been a lance-corporal for a week in 1915. "Hit was bad before th' war, hit's got worse an' worse, but w'en a company-sergeant-major falls in a dozen men and says: 'Th' three on th' right fur fatigue hin th' sergeants' mess, th' next three is grave diggers, th' next three fur jooty at th' latrines, an' th' rest ov ye is to go 'ome fur commissions—wal, by —— that put th' tin 'at on fur me!"

"Hit's a —— wash-out!" said Barton.

"Bein' a republic—let's 'ave a democratic harmy—hall hofficers helected, eh?" said Private Lamb.

"That's th' stuff t' give 'em'" added Wood.

"Let's elect a Commander-in-Chief!"

"Gents," said Alison, "I nominate to this

'ere convention Private John Baptist Chivers
fur Field-Marshal ov th' Republican harmy ! ”

“ Hooray ! ” they yelled in chorus.

“ Fellow Sovyats,” said Private Chivers,
“ I’m some’at back’ard in comin’ for’ard,
but no Middlesex man ever was known t’
funk a great responsibility—I promise, hif
elected, t’ maike ol’ Von Kluck, Hindy an’
Luddy, an’ their Jerries t’ luk like a bloomin’
Sunday School class in thirty dais ! Swelp
me if I don’t ! ”

They didn’t bother with ballots in the
election of a field-marshall—it was done by
acclamation, the convention yelling like
schoolboys for a speech.

“ Gents,” said the new field-marshall,
“ though unworthy, as ye might sai, ov sich
a ’igh ’onour, I shall do my best to ’and little
Belgium a new scrap ov paper—that, has
th’ Prime Minister would sai, is w’at we’re
out fur. Then I’ll habolish all parades,
all C.B., all horderly rooms an’ physical
jerks ! ”

“ Hooray ! Hooray !! ”

“ We’ll ‘ave no favouritism neither. I

shall appoint each ov you a lootenant-general wi' bomb-proof dug houts, Ford cars, an' double pai!"

"Hooray!! H-o-o-r-a-y!!!"

"Hits good-bye t' Woodbines an' cheerio to Maconochie for hever!"

"Hooray! Hooray!!"

"No more clickin' yer 'eels, nor heyes rightin' an' heyes leftin'! Hit'll be w'at cheer, comraide?"

"The bottles is hempty, chaps," said Barton, "but let's drain 'em t' th' new field-marshal!"

The Generals of the new army slept peacefully that night. There was fighting all around them, but the responsibilities of the new regime weighed heavily on their tired minds and with the help of the good red wine of Picardy, they slept the sleep of the just.

Next morning the field-marshal called a council of war. Dixies were empty, there were three cigarettes and about half an ounce of tobacco to serve the staff—and the future was uncertain. The council sat on the brick piles where the garden used to be.

The field-marshall was the only man who wore the insignia of his rank, and he was unconscious of the fact. Alison had stuck two brass safety pins across each other on his right shoulder strap. These, with a couple of brass buttons, were as near as he could get to what he imagined a field-marshall wore.

"Hour batman 'avin' been done in, chaps, we'll 'ave t' work wi' our 'ands," said the field-marshall. "Sheepie"—I mean General Lamb, you build a good fire. General Wood, you take them honions down, peel 'em an' roast 'em for breakfast—stick some o' them spuds hin if they're hedible."

"'Ow abawt fags an' baccy, yer hexcelency?"

"Pool 'em!" said the field-marshall. "Ain't got a—— chew or a whiff t' put in, but pool 'em. All generals bring their baccy rations right 'ere hat once!"

The three fags and the half-ounce of tobacco were laid on the altar of supreme sacrifice, and the generals breathlessly watched the division and distribution.

"Now hany man seen smokin' for th' next

two hours will be shot ! Restraine yer chimney pots an' all 'ands scrounge aroun' t' find water—no, better wait for breakfast ! ”

A slimy ditch was discovered after the repast of onions and bad potatoes, and the generals partly quenched an intolerable thirst.

It began to rain. A sentry was posted and the other six sat in the cellar planning the new constitution of the British Republic. They had settled the land question, capital and labour, and the reorganisation of religion, when the general on guard sounded the alarm. Instantly all hands emerged and looking in the direction of the sentry's pointed finger, saw a soldier approach—an officer, too !

“ Gawd ! ” exclaimed the field-marshall, “ we're pinched ! ”

“ Maike 'im a —— prisoner ! ” said General Alison.

“ Declare th' Republic ! ” snapped Barton.

“ Hiff we show th' white feather we're done hin ! ” said General Lamb.

“ What the —— are you doing here ? ”

yelled the subaltern, as he came close and scrutinised the seven generals. "Who are you? What do you belong to? Do you know the Boche is just over the hill?"

"We're ov th' —— Middlesex, sir," said the field-marshall, "an' ——"

"What the —— are those things on your shoulder straps?"

"Oh!" exclaimed the field-marshall, as he saw the brass pins and buttons for the first time, "them's what these blokes stuck on fur divilment, sir!"

"Y'see, sir——"

"The thing I see," said the subaltern, interrupting Alison's maiden effort, "is that you don't seem to know there's a war on!"

"Ow could we, sir?" said the field marshal, "just bein' only common Englishmen? Besides, sir, you see we ain't seen a bloomin' newspaper fur a week!"

"Where's your battalion?"

"Dead, sir! Died findin' hout there was a war on!"

"Well, look here," said the gradually softening subaltern, "we expect the Tenth

German Army Corps to attack in half an hour—we've got no reserves. There's only you seven men and a Labour Battalion to hold the line at this point—have you any ammunition ? ”

“ A few rounds, sir ! But there's a 'orse 'ere, you can get us some ! ”

“ You'll have to put up a big bluff here ! Dig in and snipe like—— ! ”

“ Sort o' pretend there's a war on, sir, eh ? ”

“ You take that brass foundry off your shoulder and don't be so impertinent ! ”

“ Yes, sir ! ”

The subaltern mounted Uhlan. As he rode off the field-marshall said : “ If ye could squeeze in a tin of bully and a few cigarettes, sir—we could sort o' put up a bigger bluff ! ”

“ Righto ! ”

“ An' feed th' 'orse, sir ! ”

“ Hit look'd hat one time,” said the field marshal, as the clatter of “ Uhlan's ” hoofs died away in the distance, “ as if we was on th' hedge—as ye might sai—ov turnin' th'

course ov 'uman 'istory. But, generals, th' course ov 'uman 'istory, like hour ol' friend Jerry, taikes some turnin' ! Th' Republic as fallen ! Long live th' Hempire ! " And they began to dig in !

" Strange about Tommy, we like the plain style of him,
 Love the warm smile of him,
 Never downhearted ;
Yet when we meet him we need the police around
 Swarming like bees around,
 Getting us parted.

Blood they say's thicker than water—or liquor,
Still it runs fast when we gather, I've found ;
But when barrages our ear drums are flogging,
When a drive starts that is bloody and slogging,
 Tommy's a guy we like sticking around.

Tommy, O, Tommy, here's looking at you.
We fight you whenever you heave into view,
But when the guns boom and there's trouble to
 share,
Tommy, O, Tommy, we're glad you are there."

Berton Brawley.

I

I WAS on my way to the Vosges. I left Vitry about noon and arrived at Joinville at midnight. The station was in darkness, but there was an unusual liveliness

of troops—mostly French. There were a score of Tommies, as many Americans, a platoon of Italians and twice as many Portuguese.

Nothing to eat or drink could be obtained. There was a famine of English fags. Piled up on a platform was a stack of American loaves guarded by a sentry who was a Tennessee mountaineer. The Americans and the Tommies naturally gravitated towards each other, listening and looking at each other with the usual interest of men who are alike, and different.

The station-master was a girl of eighteen—beautiful and wide-awake. Through the little window, scores of men asked questions—absurd and unnecessary. They liked to look at her and hear her talk, though hardly any English or American soldiers understood half of what she said.

The Frenchmen had monopolised the station waiting-room—perhaps they were there first. It was too cold to sleep elsewhere. They lay in rows, and in the corners were piled up like so much junk.

The place was filthy. The smells were nauseating—most French stations answer to that description. Of all the gods and goddesses ever known to the human race, Hygeia is the one never heard of in France !

In defiance of the law, an American lit a candle, turned a box on end and stuck the light on it. He had a deck of cards and wanted a game. There was no room for players and nobody wanted to play. Several sleeping Poilus were gently removed without disturbing their sleep, and half a dozen Americans gathered around the flickering light. The Tommies came as near as the prostrate Frenchmen would permit. Everywhere, and under all circumstances, the same sort of thing happens—when these men of the same race find themselves in close proximity, they like to look at each other, size each other up, and invariably end in a row. Not always fisticuffs. Back home in Kansas, Connecticut, or California, the Yankee has formed his idea of an Englishman. It was an erroneous one, but fixed and definite. Now he is in front of the real article and he

takes stock. In exactly the same way the Englishman has formed his opinion of the Yankee as something different and worse than himself. He too becomes curious when confronted with the thing about which he has already made up his mind. Each in turn is astonished, pleased, angered, jealous, and self-assertive. Each being positively certain that the other is inferior, is looking for his faults—and finds them ! Tommy is surprised not to find every American boastful, and the Yank also is surprised when he discovers that all Englishmen are neither slow nor stupid. I am writing of what these men think—not of what they say. When these things are said, there is trouble in blue and red.

“ Why do you guys smoke such truck as Woodbines ? ” said a Yankee, when a Tommy borrowed a match.

“ What do you smoke ? ” asked Tommy.

“ Here, have a real smoke,” said the Yankee as he handed Tommy a package of Fatimas.

“ Them’s nothing to brag about,” said Tommy, puffing at the Yankee product.

"Who's braggin' about them? Here now, just put one ov yer blinkin' little coffin nails beside this——"

The two cigarettes were put alongside each other and compared.

The Yankee explained that when the United States went to war, the Government bought out the cigarette monopoly and served the soldiers at cost price. Not only that, but they offered to serve the British Army on the same terms if the fags could come in free—which they didn't. That shifted the discussion from cigarettes to Governments and from that to the comparative merits of Monarchy and Democracy. By this time, all the Americans and all the Tommies were wedged together in the stuffy station, standing with feet between the legs and arms of the French.

Out of this minor passage at arms over nothing, there emerged, by the help of the more voluble, a discussion of the war—the ability of the fighters and the contribution of each of the allies. Things grew tense. The French who were awake stood staring

and puzzled as they watched the combatants in the wordy encounter.

"What are they angry about?" one Poilu asked another.

"The weather," he answered.

"*La la, impossible!*"

"Not at all, you watch their fists—they will use them when arguments fail. It is the way of the English."

"Americans are not English."

"Yes, they are; just look at them! Listen to them!"

American arguments are brief. The English are long and drawn out. An American becomes angry easier and sooner. The Englishman exhausts the subject to the last shred. He likes argument for its own sake. To be able to convince is entirely secondary.

I heard the noise of a train and squeezed myself out to inquire where it was going. When I returned, a fight was in full blast. The candle had been upset and the combatants—I don't know how many—were rolling over the Frenchmen. There was a terrific scuffle. The Poilus were making all

the noise. I couldn't get in and the door was so jammed that no one could get out. It was a lively affair while it lasted, but the darkness prevented it from lasting long. The station-master was unperturbed. No other official was around and she had to appeal to the Poilus to restore order, but they rather enjoyed the show, and besides, it was judicious to keep out of the imbroglio. Fisticuffs is not a French trait.

After a while the crowd oozed out on to the platform where, in the dim light of the early hours, nationalities formed separate groups and discussed the affair. It looked at one time as if there might be a pitched battle, but cool counsel prevailed, and the belligerents just nursed their grievances and expressed their thoughts in language more picturesque than polite.

II

The Americans found seats at one end of the platform and the Tommies made themselves comfortable at the other. In a few minutes, both groups were singing. If either of them had known a hymn of hate they would

have given it first place on the agenda, but neither of them did. But they sung with gusto what they did know. There was no rivalry in this. As a matter of fact, each group waited as if they were enjoying the singing of the others. I think they were.

"Boys," I said to the Americans, "do you know that those Tommies haven't a single cigarette amongst them?"

"Go on!" they exclaimed.

"Not even a Woodbine."

"Here," said an Indianaman, "take this package of Camels to them."

"Take them yourself," I said.

"Here," said the Yankee who had started the fight—or was in it at the start—"give me all you've got. I'll take them."

Every man fished out what he could spare and the soldier took them over. Then the singing was resumed—except by a few from each group who loitered around the little ticket window, engaging the attention, and highly amusing Mademoiselle with their bad French.

The Poilus were still excited over the fracas.

The Italians kept by themselves, so did the Portuguese. M'sieur Poilu and Tommy admired each other always—at a distance. That perhaps was due largely to the difficulty of communication. The Italians were looked upon with amusement. They had big, cumbersome three-cornered hats and were used as military policemen at rail-heads. With the Portuguese it was different, and the difference may be gleaned from a general order which came out—probably the most unique general order issued during the war. It read : “ Hereafter, Portuguese soldiers will be spoken of as our ‘ loyal Allies of Portugal ’ and not ‘ the bloody Portuguese.’ ” If the official who issued the order had not been somewhat shy on psychology, he would have foreseen the effect. The G.O. fixed securely in Tommy’s mind the thing it was issued to wipe out. Perhaps it was a pleasantry, but G.O.’s are not given to that sort of thing.

There were French and Portuguese officers there that night. The British C.O. was a lance-corporal. The Americans, except the sergeant and his guard who watched the big

stack of American loaves, were all full privates on their way to Chaumont. All the men were armed, but only the guard had ammunition.

The one bright spot in the dark and dreary place was the window of the ticket office. Inside was a light—two lights indeed—the jet of gas and the station-master who, if her position had not been merely temporary, would be called station-mistress. Tommy has a distinct genius for names. He hadn't been there half an hour before Mademoiselle was "*Femme de la Gare*," and everybody competing with him at the little windows was a "Peepin' Tom."

The Poilu could cut the British or Americans out any time he wished, and he frequently did so. He was at home; they, after all, were foreigners. When an American tried to oust a Tommy or vice versa, there was trouble. Several shindies of this nature enlivened the early hours of the morning. Each instance drove the English-speaking races farther and farther apart. All of this was highly amusing to Mademoiselle and the

Poilus. During the night she had three distinct proposals of marriage. Two of them were Americans and one an Englishman.

"Ah, m'sieur," she said to one, "you do it to make the slow night pass away quickly." To another she said "*Quelquefois!*"

III

About 3 a.m. it began to rain. The stack of loaves had first attention. The bread was covered over. All who lay in the open took shelter wherever they could find it. The waiting-room was packed to suffocation. Men lay *pêle-mêle* on the floor, snoring and grunting. The Portuguese got into a freight car. The Americans huddled close to the walls of the station-house and passed the time away turning over and over their notions of the English. The Tommies were stretching their picturesque vocabularies in poking fun at the swanky Yanks. Each group assumed that the other was a qualified rotter if he judged on the basis of practice, and ignored old-established principles, and each saw in the other an exaggerated edition

of himself. To have a common language has many advantages, but it has one great disadvantage—we know all the mean things that we say about each other, and if any meanness escaped the attention of either group that night, it may be put down to defective hearing.

One reason why the Americans have such profound admiration for the French is because in language, religion, habits, customs, laws, and literature, they have nothing whatever in common with them. Between the Briton and the Yankee it is just the opposite. They have all these in common and hence the difference. Of course, it is a surface difference and always superficially expressed.

Beneath the surface of things there is an identity real and genuine and as fundamental as the instinct of life itself.

As the first grey tints of dawn began to appear, there was a sudden outburst of rage at the British end of the platform, followed by a scuffle. A Yankee ran along to find out what it was. A moment later he returned.

“Gee whiz!” he exclaimed. “One of

them bloody Portuguese has stabbed a Tommy!" With the movement of one man, they sped like panthers along the platform and gazed open-mouthed while the wounded Tommy was stripped to dress his wound. The knife had entered the shoulder and struck the shoulder-blade. The Tommies stood around and took the affair in their usual casual way. Not a Portuguese was visible. They had fled and nobody had given chase.

"Where are they?" asked the Indianaman.

"The dirty blighters are in that box car," said a Tommy, "and there's about a hundred ov 'em."

"Look here, you British," said a Yankee, "you stand here and take in the show—don't move a finger; let us settle this affair with the Dagoes. Come on, boys."

Twenty Americans were beside the box car in an instant. The Portuguese shut the folding doors in their faces. Quick as a flash, a crate half full of straw was brought to the scene, lighted and shoved beneath the car. The smoke soon filled the inside and

the flames licked the openings. The doors were pushed back and half a dozen men jumped out. Biff ! Bang ! Thud ! over they went. A dozen jumped at once and they were pounded off their feet. The Portuguese were five to one, but the Americans were infuriated and slashed and uppercut those who were up and those who got up again. Outclassed and fought off their feet, they fled the moment they saw a chance. A dozen remained in the car. An American stooped and seven others stepped over him into the car where they punched and pummelled those who remained. The Portuguese yelled and howled, and as quickly as they saw a chance, jumped and fled. Occasionally, as one climbed to the platform, a Tommy would knock him back into the fists of a Yankee. Not half satisfied, the Yankees chased them all around the station. The Portuguese had stacked their rifles and the Americans made a rush for them. In five minutes they had smashed every barrel, and the shattered guns clattered on the rail bed.

The three Portuguese officers had been off

looking for refreshments. They returned at the drop of the curtain. One of them was a captain. When told about the affair by his men, he drew his sword and came stamping along the platform. A Tommy fixed his bayonet.

“Here,” said a Yankee, “lend that to me for a moment, Tommy.”

As the officer approached, the Yankee held the bayonet at the charge and told the officer to stand still. He did, and deeming discretion more valuable than valour, turned and went away.

All this time, the Poilus were looking on with a somewhat animated interest. Even Mademoiselle came out and as she saw her friends pounded, cried out : “*La, la !*”

IV

“Say,” said an American to the Tommies who were all standing together, “the frog-eaters are all out, let’s take possession of the waiting-room.”

The Tommies grabbed their rifles, and in a body the Anglo-Saxons marched in and made

themselves comfortable. The Poilus had run short of tobacco, and the Yankees, taking advantage of the shortage, traded tobacco for a few flasks of red wine. The wounded man was cared for first. Two Americans had special charge of him. He got the first of the wine and his choice of all the cigarettes they possessed.

A Connecticut Yankee raised a flask of wine and said : "Here's to George—I forget his number, boys—and to his Tommies, the tight little fighters who beat hell out of Fritz ! "

It was an A.S.C. man who had struck the first blow in the Anglo-American domestic trouble. It was now his turn with the flask, and he said : "'Ere's to the Yanks 'oo knocked the Port out o' Portuguese ! "

As long as the wine lasted there was a riot of toasts from both sides. A bearded Poilu leaning against the door said, as he watched and listened : "*Extraordinaire !*" "*Mon Dieu !*" said another. "It is inexplicable—at first you see no difference and you take them to be one nation. Then they fight

viciously, but with fists—then an outsider interferes and they become blood-brothers with a quickness that makes you breathless. *La, la !*"

When the last dregs of the wine had been sipped, they began to sing, and the first song was something of a surprise to Tommy. What it lacked in poetic craftsmanship was atoned for in the sincerity of sentiment. It was sung to the old tune of "John Brown's body" and ran as follows :

" We bring over food for Jerry, it's in steel and iron
clad,

We have guns and men in plenty to make Tommy
Atkins glad,

And we'll fight old Fritz together until he cries
'Kamerad,'

And we'll set old Belgium free.

Glory, glory, Hallelujah ! Glory, glory, Hallelujah !
Glory, glory, Hallelujah ! And we'll set old Belgium
free.

There were half a dozen verses, but I jotted but one of them down at the time. This was followed by "The Yanks are coming" and "Swanee River."

A train came in. The Yankees gathered up their belongings and sprang on board.

The Tommies gathered around and shook hands, and as the train moved out, cheered as I have seldom heard them cheer, and they continued to cheer as did the Americans out of the car windows, until the train rounded a curve and they were lost to sight.

"What did he stab you for?" I asked the wounded Tommy, and he replied: "I caught the blighter pinching the American bread."

“ Care, mad to see a man sae happy,
E'en drown'd himsel' amang the nappy !
As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,
The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure :
Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious ! ”

Burns.

I

IN May, 1918, the little town of E——sur-Mer had its first baptism of fire from the air, and in a few weeks was rendered almost uninhabitable.

The town was one of the largest British bases in France. Up to the time of the first air raid it had not occurred to the military authorities to provide protection, and only after hundreds of fighting men and nurses had been killed, were trenches dug and red crosses painted on the hospitals.

When the London newspapers came out with a blood-curdling story of the “ deliberate

bombing of hospitals," there was a vigorous and universal revolt among the British troops, not over the raids, but over the deliberate untruthfulness of the report. The fact was that hospitals, tents, huts, dumps and main railway lines were all together and formed a perfectly legitimate objective for the enemy. When the damage was done, red crosses were painted on the hospitals and trenches were dug for the nurses. But that is history : here is the story :

The cellar of the Chapeau Rouge was considered the safest *abri* in the town. The military regulations usually cleared the town of soldiers at sundown, but Jerry came over early one night and caught us napping.

I followed a kilted Scot and found myself in the cellar with a dozen soldiers and about as many civilians. Of the soldiers, there were three of the Royal Scots, four were Guardsmen, one a Dublin Fusilier, one American Infantryman and three or four men of the A.S.C.

The civilians were mostly old men and women. Madame Barbezat was the proprietor

of the *estaminet* (while her husband was at the front) and Etietnette, her nineteen-year-old daughter, was the attraction.

The cellar was a musty hole. The walls were damp and dirty. It was full of casks—full and empty—bits of furniture taken there for safe keeping, garden tools, bedding, and utensils for cooking and serving meals. A candle stuck in a bottle and set on a barrel in the centre shed its yellow light on faces that looked terror stricken.

Some sat on barrels, others sat on boxes and others on the floor. I sat between two soldiers on a box in a corner near the door. There were nervous souls who could neither sit nor stand, but moved about over the few open spaces between the rows of barrels and stacks of bottles. We were passing along the usual courtesy—cigarettes—when Etietnette came toward us and addressing the man on my right as “M’sieur Tam,” took him to the corner where her mother and some children sat.

“‘ M’sieur Tam’ must be some person around here,” I said to the man on my left.

"Oh, aye," he replied, "ye're richt there,
he is jist th' hale —— show."

Later I learned all about the show and Tam's part in it, but that simple phrase on the lips of Etietnette was the curtain-raiser in the little drama.

Tam McTavish had a leading part, it is true, but he was not "th' hale —— show." That rôle fell to the lot of Etietnette, if it fell to anybody. In appearance she looked as if she had just stepped out of a Watteau canvas in the Louvre. At least, for a few hours each afternoon she looked like that. In the morning she was scrub woman, cook and waitress, and cleaned the place out, and one must have seen the Chapeau Rouge to have any idea of just what that meant.

In the afternoon the procession started and kept passing her until late at night. And she had seen it, sampled it, served it and entertained it, seven afternoons a week and fifty-two weeks in each of the three years during which she had stood in the breach to preserve the little business of her father.

I do not think the high priests of *Æsthetics* would have called her beautiful. The soldiers did, but they have their own ideas about such things. She was the magnet that drew custom to the inn. There was no doubt of that. Men liked to look at her, loved to hear her laugh. It was not the sort of laugh that "bespeaks the vacant mind." It was mellow in tone, jubilant and spontaneous in its nature and as contagious as smallpox. Her smile was joy. When she laughed her mouth puckered and extended like a poppy turning its petals to the sun for the first time.

Her low-necked square-cut blouse and delicately embroidered lingerie lightly covered a white living statue that gave men joy to look at. Through the thin, transparent texture her exquisitely modelled shoulders could be plainly seen and between the shoulders a dimple, not unlike the dimples in her cheeks. It was subtle but natural and displayed in good conscience. She had very dark brown hair, bluish-green eyes with heavy lashes. Only a voluptuary

could have seen in her voluptuousness. A quick glance taking in all these features at once would instantly create the impression that the picture was virginal.

Continuous and unrelieved serving at a public counter produces, in the course of time, what might be called a public face. A suggestion of that was noticeable when she was tired. Then her smile became somewhat mechanical—the sort of smile that still remains on the face of a tired hostess long after her guests have gone. It takes a maturity and strength of character to withstand the constant flattery and meaningless piffle of men who chatter to a pretty girl, just to while away an idle hour.

The soul of Etienette was still preserved, but she was like a water-lily floating on a pond by the roadside—naturally pure and beautiful, but too near the highway to escape the dust. To many men she was a pastime, to others she was a good target for bad French, to others she was a flame in whose fiery glow life was sharpened and reshaped. In her little drawer behind the counter she

had a great treasure that only the trusted initiates ever saw. It was a note with blood-stains on it, scratched by the dying hand of a British soldier who loved her for her own sake. She could not remember his face, she had utterly forgotten his name. She seriously questioned whether she had heard it or not, but that blood-stained letter added a look of dignity and repose to her face. She always resented men crossing that unknown line which divides ordinary conversation from undue familiarity, but after she received the note she never could be harsh or severe, and it was even hard for her to be firm.

To be kind, courteous and obliging was her common lot—it was her life. Nothing would have surprised her more than to be told that she was performing a service, but to most of us, “service” in an *estaminet* is unthinkable anyway, it is beyond our ken. It is described by no holy phrases and no official eye records the moves of the hand or reports the number of smiles in a day.

Etienette had been serving men for a year before she had a heart flutter, then came

Roderick McClean, a young shepherd of the Grampians, who in 1914 had heard the call of the Clan. He met her the first night his regiment entered E——sur-Mer, and before he left that night she had written her name in the fly leaf of his soldier's New Testament.

In the days when wounds were "Blighties" and men came home to recover, the young Highlander requested to be sent to hospital in E——sur-Mer, where for two months he revelled in the joy of being near her. He was inordinately shy, diffident and retiring. He sent messages occasionally to Etienette and she visited him in hospital. When convalescing he spent all the time allowed in the estaminet. The ambiguousness of the Scots character was no new thing to Etienette. Roderick was just an exaggerated case. He had considerable force of personality and with kindly persistence forced her to take a really serious interest in the English language. The Scots comment on the result was that she understood English and spoke Scotch. Her first look at English print was through

"A Window in Thrums." Patiently and with much laughter he led her through it, page by page, and one afternoon when she addressed a timid Scot and said "Come awa' ben th' hoose, ma laddie," Roderick felt that he had not lived in vain.

The young Highlander made no secret of his passion. He told everybody—everybody except Etienette. Other men spoke in terms direct. They swore by the gods they loved her. She was used to that but knew it was shallow, if not utterly meaningless; they were long on declaration and short on evidence. Roderick was full of evidence, but she had no direct knowledge of what he was trying to prove.

She noticed that it was characteristic of the Scots character, at least in the affairs of the heart, to go the longest way round, to say one thing and mean another. Not in a hypocritical sense at all, but under the false assumption that a French girl could follow in the circuitous pathway of the dubious Scots mind—to say nothing of the intricacies of the Scots dialect.

II

In the Chapeau Rouge, while we were waiting for Jerry, another phase of the Scots character was discussed, and as she felt intuitively that she was coming rapidly to a crisis with Roderick, she bristled with attention.

"It's no thtrue," said "M'sieur Tam," "that the Scots tak no prisoners—but it is done when we canna dae otherwise."

"Come off your perch, Jock," said the Yankee. "My regiment was sent into the line with the Jocks for the sole purpose of learning from them how not to take prisoners. Gee whiz! That was some education!"

"Did you git th' hang oot?" asked "M'sieur Tam," with a dry grin towards his kilted comrades.

"Oh, shure, you bet—and went you one better. There was one machine gun that snuffed out sixty of our men before we could touch it, but we finally got through and when we did, the Boche gunner tore *her* tunic open and showed her breasts. Then she threw her hands up."

"Did she gang west be th' short roote?"

"Jist as shure as you've got no pants on, she did. No — man nor woman," says the sergeant, "can mow down sixty Yankee boys and live to tell th' tale. An' she didn't."

Etiennette shuddered. "M'sieur Tam" imagined it was a tremor of fear. It was, but not fear of the bombs.

"Whist!" exclaimed the Dublin man. We held our breath for a moment. The dogs barked. Madame said they never made a mistake. Apparently they didn't this time, for the Archies began to bark at the same time. An awful feeling of helplessness took possession of us all. There was nothing to do. Nothing could be done. Hundreds had been blown to shredded flesh all around us during the previous nights. Men take chances in a thousand ways in front of the enemy and think nothing of it, but to be killed like a rat in a hole seems the most ignoble of all forms of death.

"There is twenty feet of solid masonry above us," said Tam, looking at the ceiling.

"Aye," said the omnipresent cheerful

idiot—a kilted Scot this time—“but ye know them aerial torpedoes wud git us even doun here.”

“Weel, ye hae this thocht fur yer consola-tion,” said Tam, “ye’d niver ken ye wor hit.”

Crash ! Boom-m-m-m ! It sounded as if a million windows had been smashed at one blow. The earth trembled. Civilians put their hands out to keep the walls steady. What extraordinary things people do on the edge of death—a catastrophic death. Four or five of the men lit fresh cigarettes, before the ones they were using were half smoked. Madame Barbezat wrung her hands and moaned. Etienette’s face turned very white, but she remained quite calm beside her mother.

“M’sieur Tam” was the busiest man in the cellar. He went from one corner to another using up his limited French vocabulary in accompanying old men and women who shrank and trembled in terror. Laying his hands tenderly on Madame’s head, he said softly : “*Tout va bien—tout va bien.*”

After half an hour’s bombardment some

of us came out to look around. The house next door and five others were in heap of ruins and men were already pulling mangled bodies out of the pile. A second alarm sent us all to cover again. The Gothas were overhead but no bombs were dropping. Half the soldiers did not return to the cellar, and for the civilians, bedding was brought down and preparations made for a number of them to stretch out on the floor and go to sleep.

Etiennette had become thoughtful. That was something new—to her listeners. They never imagined her thinking. She asked them why M'sieur Tommy Atkins never told stories of things beautiful. They said he did, but not in an *estaminet*.

" You are—what do you say—candeed," she answered. " Do you think, m'sieur, that we French exist to amuse you ? "

" It's no that, lass," McIntosh said ; " It's jist a habit like."

" To only be one plaything—Ah, m'sieur, *je suis très fatiguée*."

" Ye see, lass," said Tam, " there's no sich thing as sentimentality in sodgerin'—it's jist

fecht, fecht a' th' year lang an' men gang tae an *estaminet* tae blow off superfluous steam, like."

"But steam isna guid for a woman a' th' time, M'sieur Tam, is it?" she said, smiling.

"Havers!" Tam said, "ah didna think o' that."

"Nobody thinks o' it, M'sieur Tam. Our Poilus talk of beautiful deeds and beautiful thoughts—why not M'sieur Tommy?"

"Yer a wee bit wrang there, lass; ye see, an *estaminet* is th' only place in France whar he can speak what's in him."

"All what is in him? *Parlez à cœur ouvert, s'il vous plaît.*"

"Weel, no, ah cannna say all."

How could she understand. How could Tam help her to know that an *estaminet* is part of the life of the French people and has a totally different status to an English public house. Tommy seldom sees the difference. Etiennette was profoundly interested in these men. What she strove after was to understand them. Intuitively she knew that what she saw was but a phase of life, but she was

mystified about the Scot and feared him. Tam was just as anxious to enlighten her as she was to learn, but his method only made confusion more confounded. Roderick had charged Tam to present his claims ; he had told him about his plans and pipe dreams. He kept nothing back. He went into rhapsodies over the maid of the inn—told Tam he loved her ; he told all the chums he knew the same thing. Stevens went on watch at the front door while Etiennette cleaned up the counter. Tam sat down beside me. I was curious about the manner and movement of this canny Scot and timidly ventured to ask a few questions.

“ Weel, sir,” Tam said, “ ah’d rather gang o’er th’ top seventeen times than dae what ah’m up against this nicht. Ah wud that ! ”

“ Going to propose ? ” I asked.

“ Aye,” said Tam, “ that’s juist it—but no fur masel’ ! ”

“ That may be an advantage or a blessing in disguise,” I said.

“ It’s no in this case,” he muttered as if to himself. Then amid many interruptions

he gave me snatches of the story. The final colloquy with Roderick is worth recording.

"Dae ye mean tae tell me, Roderick, that ye hinna telt th' lassie that ye love 'er?"

"Dae ye think ah'm daft?" asked Roderick.

"Ah dinna, but did ye no propose?"

"Dae ye think she hisna' got a pickle o' sense?"

"Ah dinna, but she hisna' got muckle if she marries without bein' asked."

"Man Tam, ah'm sair deceived in ye. Ah thocht ye wud appreciate a great honour. Ah'm juist handin' m' life's happiness o'er tae ye, so's ye cud han' it back tae me an' be able tae say tae th' end o' yer days—' he owes it a' tae me.'"

Stevens and Etiennette came down the stone steps carrying coffee and biscuits for the cave dwellers—most of them were asleep on the floor. Tam got some tools and removed the cellar window—and let out the smoke.

"M'sieur Tam," said Etiennette, as we sat around the candle, drinking coffee, "when a man in your country asks a girl to marry

him does he ever tell her that he loves her?" "We all laughed, we couldn't help it. It was the way she said it, as much as what she said.

"Oh, aye, Etiennette," Tam said, "he does that, but th' Scots hae a queer sort o' way o' daein' it."

"Ah'll tell ye one o' th' ways a Scot proposes," said McIntosh, with some glee. "He'll maybe tak his fiancee inta th' kirk yerd and showin' her th' tombs o' his ancestors wull say: 'Wud ye like tae lie there whin ye dee?'"

"But ye mus'na rin awa wi' th' notion that a Scot canna love juist as weel as a Frenchman," said Tam.

"And do the women say 'No' when they mean 'Yes'?" she asked, smiling.

"Whiles," Tam answered.

"Ah'll tell ye a fact aboot a chum o' mine," said McIntosh. "We wes in Ypres last year an' ma friend used tae get a letter every week. Yin day ah happened tae see th' letter an' it wes juist a plain bit o' white writin' paper, wi' no a single word on it. 'It's a short

epistle,' says I. 'It is that,' says he, 'but ye see ma sweetheart an' me air no on speakin' terms.' 'An dae ye send 'er th' same kind o' letter?' says I. 'Ah dae nothin' o' th' sort,' says he. 'Ah send back th' same yin.'"

"*Voilà!* how sweet for M'sieur le Censor," exclaimed Etiennette.

"Ah wes best man at th' weddin'," said McIntosh, "an' a happier pair o' lovers ah've never seen."

"Egad," said the Dublin man who had been asleep on a barrel, "they must have had a shell shock, or a double-barrelled charge of Irish whisky!"

III

The dogs barked. The sleepers were startled into consciousness. Bombs began to explode. We guessed the distance and direction, and Tam, of course, located them five miles away and assured everybody that in a few minutes it would be all over. There isn't anything more delightfully naïve than the intellectual dictatorship of the Scot in a

cellar under such circumstances. His knowledge is absolute—his wisdom unerring. Nobody ever has the nerve to question him on matters of fact, or on matters of opinion—it's useless, it's hopeless. That was Tam's position and I gloated over it. He squelched the Irishman, he silenced the cheerful idiot, he kept the Guardsmen from sitting at the feet of either Madame Barbezat or Etiennette. He tolerated McIntosh but kept him in his place. And all the time he was waiting for an opening to propose to Etiennette—for Roderick.

It finally came. Jerry had been hovering around for hours. He had dropped a hundred bombs but as few ran any risks in finding out, little was known of the actual loss of life or destruction of buildings until it was all over.

“Ye maun’ listen tae me fur five meenites, Etiennette,” he said, as he led her to a quiet corner and seated her on a barrel, taking a seat beside her.

“Ah’m Roderick’s best friend. His tongue is no glib, his pen is no facile, but his hert is a’ that ony man or ony wuman cud expect,

an' it's th' hert that coonts. He niver spoke tae ye aboot himsel—did he ? ”

“ No, nevair.”

“ No, th' Scot is a bit queer in that. His folks is juist harrd wurkin' people o' th' glens. He was a shepherd lad, but he's din well in th' Royal Scots. He's bin decorated three times fer brave deeds, but he'd no be tellin' ye that either. No, nor wud he be tellin' ye o' his dreams aboot a beautiful bit cottage an' a gerden, oh, no, but they're a' in his mind.”

“ To live in, all by himself, M'sieur Tam ? ” she naïvely interrupted.

“ Oh, no, no, but dinna push sae harrd, lass, fur ah'm no sae glib as Roderick thinks ah am.”

“ Ah, M'sieur Tam, do *parlez à la hate*, and say to me what it is for. *Voilà !* A bomb may blow us all to heaven some minute *bientôt*.”

“ Havers, no, lass, th' Almighty'll no be sae harrd on Roderick. Dinna fret.”

“ *La pointe, la pointe, M'sieur Tam ! que vouliez-vous que je fasse ?* ” and she shook

his arm, smiling and looking into his eyes.

"He'll get ten days' furlough t'morrow—will ye gang wi' him tae th' mairie an' get marrit? Noo there it is, ye skirlin' wee bit o' sair temptation. Wull ye dae it?"

"Ha, ha, *je suis une dentiste*," she said, laughing aloud and taking his face in her hands, drew her own close up to it. "I pull it out like—what you say?—one tooth."

"Wull ye dae it?" he said, withdrawing his face from her hands.

"Will he kiss me *toujours* if I do?"

"He wull."

"*S'il refuse*—will you?"

"Almighty!—" said Tam, in sheer hypocrisy—"that ah sud iver live tae come tae this—an' me—"

The "all clear" sounded and drowned the end of the sentence. There was a stir among the tired underground denizens and a rush for the entrance. Before anyone could ascend the stone steps, a Guardsman clattered down into the cellar and gave us the first news. Of the hundreds killed, a score of

them were well known in the Chapeau Rouge—and amongst them, Roderick McClean.

Six months later I was on my way to G.H.Q., and going through E—sur-Mer I dropped into the old Chapeau Rouge for a midday meal. It was the busy hour, but the moment I saw Etietnette behind the counter, I went up for a word of greeting and to get, if possible, some news of the old friends.

"I am Scotch now," she said, with a merry twinkle in her eyes.

"Scotch? Who was the lucky dog? Not M'sieur Tam!"

"*Oui*. He loved me all the time, m'sieur, and as he was 'no glib,' I proposed," and she laughed heartily.

"And you will live in Scotland, *après la guerre?*"

"Ah, m'sieur, what does it matter where one lives, when we live in '*L'abri d'amour*'?"

“Vain, mightiest fleets of iron framed ;
Vain, those all-shattering guns ;
Unless proud England keep, untamed
The strong heart of her sons.
So let his name through Europe ring—
A man of mean estate,
Who died as firm as Sparta’s King,
Because his soul was great.”

Sir F. H. Boyle.

I

I MET Sparks in a rest camp in Dorset in the early part of 1917. Five thousand Diggers from Gallipoli were getting into shape for the Western Front. Leave was freely given, but for some reason transportation was not available. Economic tight-lacing which may work well with Tommy will fall short of the same result when applied to a Digger. He’s different. The real Digger has an extra drop of nervous fluid in his

make-up, and there are times and circumstances under which this extra thing makes a demonstration. This was one of them. They had earned the right to enjoy life. They had closed one chapter in the war ; they were about to open another. Only the most pudden-headed, bovine type of red-tapist could have been blind to the psychology of the situation.

These edge-of-the-world men are accustomed to elbow room, expansive blue skies and a kinship with nature denied to us men of the back streets and alleys of these British Isles. They are not as easily fitted into the moulds of the old-time military life as we are.

The railway restrictions rubbed the fur the wrong way, and there was trouble and plenty of it. The men crowded the stations, and the railway officials called in the Military Police. That was like pouring petrol on the flames to extinguish them. Sixty M.P.'s were taken into dry dock for repairs. Canteens were demolished, huts were reduced to kindling, and that old Dorset town was as lively as a county fair.

A full-fledged, old regime Brigadier-General was sent down to restore order. He made a speech—a military speech. He threatened to turn machine-guns on the Diggers if they didn't behave militarily. They were not prepared for this speech, but when he mounted a table to deliver a second one next day, they had brought along their reply. Eggs, either good, bad or indifferent, were not to be had for love or money at the time, but somebody had a cargo of bad lemons, and at the end of the first round the speech was cut short by a yellow barrage that knocked the old Brigadier off the table. They didn't want to hurt anything but the old man's dignity. They laughed loudly as each volley found the range, and when he went away they cheered him—cheered him for his pluck in attempting to confine new Australian wine in old military bottles. The men were confined to camp for a time, and some of them were court-martialled. Sparks was clearly distinguished as the leader of the Lemon Fusiliers, and showed no signs of aversion to the distinction.

He was a tall, angular sort of man with

dark brown hair, hazel eyes that gleamed like little fires from beneath heavy eyebrows. His speech was rather slow, but correct. He had a keen sense of humour, cutting at times, and more prone to laugh at you than with you, which is humour with a difference and a defect. He was a born leader of men, but his pet aversion being military discipline, he never aspired to promotion. He couldn't understand Tommy—especially the bovine type of Tommy.

"What the — are you fighting for, then?" he asked a Tommy at the bar of the "Black Bear" one night.

"M' bleedin' country," answered Tommy.

"Kid," said Sparks, "if you could see your bleedin' country as I see it, you'd hand the damned thing over to the Kaiser, toot sweet."

Of course he meant the weather, and if anyone had said the same thing and meant anything else, Sparks would have been the first to resent it.

I happened to be lunching with the C.O. when Major Webster came in from the court-

martial which had tried Sparks for leadership in "the riots."

"What did you do with him, Major?" I asked.

"Well," said the Major, "we should have given him a year, but when he politely invited us to rub it in on him, we gave him a month!"

"I have been in this rest camp for two weeks," he wrote me from prison, "and I find myself bang up against a new phase of the human mind—or should I say the British or the Anglo-Saxon mind? All types of men who have committed all sort of offences are chucked into a heap, and labelled with one label. At every move we are forcibly reminded that we are criminals. A few more weeks and they would batter it so thoroughly into my brains that I would believe it myself. Yesterday a male flapper with a monocle and a voice like a tin whistle asked me what I had committed. 'Me?' I said, 'haven't you heard? I'm the bloke that robbed the cash-box of the Salvation Army. I broke into a convent and ran away with a nun; I robbed little kids of their sweets and stole pennies

from a blind man. I——' Ah, God!" the letter concludes, "this clink chokes me. I feel its grip on my throat. Oh, for one hour with the mute sheep on a wide prairie and my dog—how divine dumb animals are compared to the cussedness, violence, hatred, revenge and malice of this biped man!"

II

A year later I met Sparks in Peronne. He was in the Citadel with a few hundred other Diggers. I knew the Australians had pushed on toward St. Quentin. The sentry at the gate told me that the Citadel had been turned into a rest camp. Not being a Marine, I knew there was another version of the story.

The R.T.O. was an old acquaintance of mine, and he told me that after having been promised relief for months, and seeing no hope of getting it, about five hundred Diggers struck in the front line. So they were marched into the old Citadel for safe keeping.

Part of my mission in France was to deal with just such situations as this, and it was

easy enough to find the officer of the guard and get permission to address the men. I went up on the ramparts of the old fort, and called the men together. Before I made an opening a heavy hand was laid on my shoulder from behind. I looked sharply around, and there stood Sparks !

"I am not always in trouble!" he said smiling, "but you usually turn up when I am."

I told him I was alarmed about the scrape, but he could not take it seriously.

"It was a childish thing," he said, "but it will blow over. They know we can be depended upon when there is fighting to be done."

There was a boxing bout in the courtyard of the old fortress, and I saw Sparks in action. He was pitted against a professional for three rounds, and rendered a good account of himself. As soon as he finished the bout, we went up on the ramparts and seated ourselves on the grass.

"Have you noticed the birds in this region?" he asked.

"I noticed the magpies," I said, "and that perhaps is because there are so many of them."

"At Albert," he said, "I became interested in the life of swallows. I used to watch them in the ruins of the cathedral. It was shelled by day and bombed by night, but they were brave. They kept on trying to build. I imagined they would get disheartened and quit, but when the nest was shot away they found a hole lower down and began all over again."

"Tell me about this revolt," I interrupted.

I was concerned and could not conceal my anxiety. Here were a few hundreds of the finest fighting men in the British Army in prison literally, and as unconcerned as if the thing was a mere schoolboy's escapade.

"What about it?" he asked.

"Are you going back?"

"Oh, you bet; but you see we were promised a rest months ago, and we are just taking it."

Then he went on with his bird stories. He had listened to the nightingale singing

in competition with the bursting shells. He knew a family of owls that lived in a barn, and one day Jerry got the barn by a direct hit—but the owls flew away, “laughing.”

“Do you know,” he said, “I’m strongly of the opinion that the birds are all enjoying a huge holiday while their chief enemy, man, is so busy killing man that he hasn’t time to kill birds, and the birds seem to know the situation.”

It was a new explanation of bird life at the front, and I’m inclined to think he is not so very wide of the mark.

“One night,” he concluded, “we had a gas attack. Next morning we found four young swallows choked to death—gassed—and the old father-bird with his wings out-spread, dead also. He had died while trying to protect them. In the fight next day I lost a chum. We buried him by the roadside, and in a Boche helmet we put the swallows and buried them with him. I am sure he liked that, for he was on the edge of tears when we found them stiff and cold

in death. I made a cross, put his name on it, and beneath his name :

A DIGGER
AND FIVE SWALLOWS.
R.I.P.

"What are you going to do after the war?" I asked when he had finished his bird stories.

"Back to God's land as quickly as possible," he answered at once. "You see, really we don't fit in here. Life is too narrow, too superficial for men born in the open. Narrow ideas like narrow streets and alleys choke us! It will be a little hard to settle down at first. Europe has fascinations and strange allurements, but they are unreal; one tires of it. At least, I do, and I long for the freedom from restraint and this eternal convention and social camouflage!"

"But you have made a great reputation here in this war!"

"Hell!" he exclaimed. "Who wants to be known as merely a fighter? Man was not born to kill men: that's an incident—

perhaps a necessity—but the work of man is akin to the work of his Maker: he was born to create and build and beautify. When I get back to Australia I want to do my bit in making my land a paradise of God."

I was not sure then that in front of me sat a man with the typical Australian mind. I did not then know that there was such a thing as an Australian mind. I know now. Hitherto I had looked upon the Digger as I think the average Englishman looked upon him—as a colonial—a colonist with a racial inheritance modified by climate, self-reliance and opportunity for self-expression and new institutions. The Australian mind is a distinctly national mind. It is, I think, more idealistic than the English mind. It conjugates its verbs in the future tense. It is eternally looking ahead—never lingering very long at a time around the milestones of the past. The typical Australian is as different from the typical Englishman as a Hindoo is from an Irishman. In the soul of the Digger one finds the dynamic vigour of youth—youth with all its defects and values, conscious

of the flesh but more acutely conscious of the spirit. It is an adventurous soul, capable of great emotion, great sentiment, great sacrifice. It reflects acquaintance with the primeval forest, the silence of lonely places, close contact with nature, and is shot through with a profound and reverent sense of man's place in the scheme of things.

III

In the last phase of the war, in the last days of the great advance, the full force of the Australians was thrown into the line along the valley of the Somme.

In their retreat the Germans had left rear guards to cover the retreat of the main force. A pill-box at the edge of a thick wood had held up the advancing tide. It was alive with machine guns. A storm of molten metal had reduced the trees around it to stark, bare stumps, and churned the earth to mud, but the pill-box remained. Under cover of darkness a detachment of Australians was ordered to take it at the point of the bayonet. It failed. A second tried, with

the same result. Fifty men volunteered for a third assault. Sparks was one of them. Silently and with the litheness of panthers the men went over the top and out into the darkness toward the objective. A Boche plane was heard. It was flying low and dropping Véry lights. The men were ordered to lie down flat on the ground. Bombs began to drop. They were dangerously near. The defenders were on their guard. When the attackers were within twenty yards, a deadly fire opened and in less than five minutes half the attacking force were out. All officers and non-coms. were gone. Sparks assumed command. He ordered the men to lie down. In that position he outlined a plan of attack. The little force was divided—half were to go to the left, and half to the right. No shots were to be fired.

Seven men took the pill-box. No prisoners were taken : the cost was too high for that. A candle was lit and placed in the centre. Each man lit a cigarette and sat down around the dim light. Sixteen dead Germans lay around. It was a gruesome sight if anyone

had taken the trouble to look. It was a close shave. They were all conscious of that, and expressed relief.

"Turner," said Sparks to one of the seven (who had just joined the unit after a month in clink), "this — pill-box has played particular — with the advance of the Division; these blighters lying around us have accounted for hundreds of our boys. When we give an account of the deeds done in a pill-box I'm going to inform the C.O. that you bossed the show."

"Why? What have you got against me?"

"Nothing. You are the most unlucky dog in the A.I.F. You have earned a dozen D.C.M.'s. This is your turn—what do you say, boys?"

"Righto!" they said.

"What's the — game?" asked Turner.

"No game at all—just that we followed you, and as a result took this devil's hole and let the Division push on. That's all."

Turner laughed outright. "Reform of a jail bird, eh? Who ain't a jail bird here?"

Who ain't been in clink ? All of us. This is a symptom, or what d'ye call it, of a bunch of lunatics. Ha, ha, ha ! Imagine me—a hearse driver in Adelaide with Sparks—D.C.M. on my chest. Jumpin' fiddlesticks ! The very corpse would crawl out and have me pinched!"

When they were rendering an account to the C.O., six of them arrived and were ready to swear on a stack of Bibles that Turner was the bravest man in the Division. Turner laughed and cussed and protested, but it was of no avail. He was recommended for the D.C.M. He went west a week later, and a few days before the Armistice Sparks followed him into the Great Unknown. His end was as dramatic as his career in France. He was found in a shell hole. Three dead Germans lay around him. He was evidently the last of the four to die, for he had taken a sealed blood-stained letter out of his pocket and, placing it on the back of a dead German, he drove his knife through it to emphasise his desire to have it delivered. It was addressed to a girl in Kent, and she alone knows the contents.

In the days to come I shall think of Sparks *not* as a soldier particularly—though he was that to the tips of his fingers; nor shall I think of him as a sterling representative of the new democracy beyond the Pacific. I shall remember him best by an incident that took place beyond Péronne one August evening in 1918.

IV

A thousand Germans were marched back from the line to the nearest cage. After the preliminaries of inspection and registration, about five hundred of the prisoners came up close to the barbed wire to have a look at their captors. Their captors were Australians, and a souvenir-hunting group of them came to the cage to find out what they could buy from Jerry. Jerry, having no iron crosses to sell, was asked how long Germany could hold out. Jerry, though a prisoner, was by no means the delighted-to-be-caught coward the newspapers pictured him to be. When the spokesman for the prisoners showed defiance behind the barbed wire, the Diggers ragged him for crying "*Kamerad.*" Few of the

prisoners could speak English, but they replied to the ragging by a song of defiance. Five hundred of them sang with tremendous gusto the "Watch on the Rhine." The Diggers looked on and listened. I wondered what they would do. I was the more interested because Sparks was there. Personally, in the depths of my own soul I admired this spirit. Did it make the same appeal to Australians? I wondered. No British soldier ever sings of glory. He has no songs of hate. In defeat and humiliation these captives stood erect, while their shoulder-straps were ripped off; then in answer to humorous banter, because they have no sense of humour, they sang their defiance. The strong, finely chiselled face of Sparks was a fascinating study at that moment. It was the clear voice of Sparks that led the British answer to the German song. Across the space that divided the captives from captors floated softly these words :

"Nights are growing very lonely,
Days are very long—"

Then the weird, haunting chorus :

"There's a long long trail a-winding
Into the land of my dreams,
Where the nightingales are singing
And a white moon beams.
There's a long long night of waiting
Until my dreams all come true—
Till the day when I'll be going
Down that long long trail with you."

This incident revealed to me the soul of the Digger more clearly than all the books ever written about him. Sparks undoubtedly had that farewell love-letter in his pocket at the time. The soul's expression did not end in song. The Diggers dug out all the tobacco and cigarettes they had and flung them over to Jerry, and then quietly walked away—some to the life that now is, Sparks to the long, long trail that never ends.

THE END

